OLD!

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THE ESSENTIAL GUIDE TO CLASSIC GAMES

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THE MAKING OF…
ROAD BLASTERS
BEHIND THE SCENES OF ATARI'S HIT APOCALYPTIC BLASTER





WE'RE ALL DOOMED!
JOHN ROMERO
Wolfenstein 3D's co-creator takes over the magazine

LET'S ALL PLAY
BEACH-HEAD
RETRO GAMER READERS GIVE THEIR VERDICT ON US GOLD'S 8-BIT CLASSIC

THE HISTORY OF…
DIZZY
THE OLIVER TWINS DISCUSS THEIR ICONIC 8-BIT HERO

FEATURED IN THIS ISSUE OF RETRO GAMER

BACK TO THE 80S
TIME-TRAVELLING SHENANIGANS AS WE HEAD BACK TO THE GOOD OLD DAYS

THE ADDAMS FAMILY
THE GREATEST 16-BIT PLATFORMER THAT DIDN'T FEATURE MARIO OR SONIC

REZ
WHY SEGA'S FUSION OF MUSIC AND GAMING IS STILL BRILLIANT

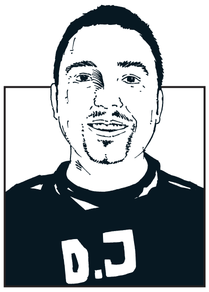
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THE RETROBATES

WHAT'S YOUR FAVOURITE JOHN ROMERO GAME?



DARRAN JONES

It's *Wolfenstein 3D* for me. Not only was it totally revolutionary at the time, but it was a hell of a lot of fun to play and far, far better than the effort released last year.

Expertise:
Juggling a wife, two beautiful girls and **Retro Gamer**

Currently playing:
Advance Wars: Dual Strike

Favourite game of all time:
Strider



STUART HUNT

Doom gave me one of my best Christmas holidays growing up: I bought a copy for my PlayStation with some Christmas money and spent the entire holiday working through it and loving every blood-soaked minute.

Expertise:
Games with flying bits in them

Currently playing:
Battlefield 1943

Favourite game of all time:
Battlefield 1943



JASON KELK

I've not played any John Romero games. This is becoming slightly embarrassing…

Expertise:
Not playing games by people who **RG** is talking to, it seems.

Currently playing:
Portal (XBLA)

Favourite game of all time:
Io



CRAIG GRANNELL

As much of a retro-head as I am, which means 3D games mostly leave me cold, it's got to be *Doom*, with a great sense of atmosphere that still appeals.

Expertise:
Games you don't need 37 fingers to control

Currently playing:
Vector Tanks Extreme

Favourite game of all time:
H.E.R.O.



PAUL DRURY

Unsurprisingly, *Doom*. It gave us the BFG, suggested chainsaws weren't just for felling trees, and influenced gaming in a way only a handful of titles can claim to have done.

Expertise:
Cosplay

Currently playing:
Vib Ribbon

Favourite game of all time:
Sheep In Space



ANDREW FISHER

He worked on *Space Rogue* on the C64, which I loved. And of course *Doom*, in all its shapes and forms.

Expertise:
Commodore 64

Currently playing:
Rock Band 2

Favourite game of all time:
The Sentinel



ASHLEY DAY

I've since grown tired of the FPS genre but the original *Doom* blew my mind back in 1993. It felt like I was entering a believable alternate universe and nearly caused me to turn my back on 2D games altogether.

Expertise:
The games of Team17, MSX, Sega's *Shining Force* series

Currently playing:
Final Fantasy XIII

Favourite game of all time:
Shining Force III



RICHARD BURTON

Predictable but it's got to be *Doom*. Running around blasting the hell out of everything – what's not to like? Truly a seminal title that changed gaming.

Expertise:
Spectrum and Amstrad, anything *Jet Set Willy* and *Manic Miner* related

Currently playing:
Sexy Parodius

Favourite game of all time:
Manic Miner



PAUL DAVIES

Daikatana, for its great comedy value.

Expertise:
Banging my head against a brick wall

Currently playing:
Final Fantasy IV

Favourite game of all time:
Ghouls 'N Ghosts



IAIN LEE

It has to be *Doom*, without a shadow of a doubt. Read my column for more details.

Expertise:
Pretending to be an American while playing Xbox Live

Currently playing:
Doom (iPhone)

Favourite game of all time:
Elite (BBC Model B)

LOADING...

The start of the Eighties saw the true beginning of the field of digital game design. The sheer volume and variety of game ideas realised then – arcade classics such as *Pac-Man*, *Frogger*, *Defender*, *Tempest*, *Donkey Kong* and *Centipede* – was staggering and remains unique in the history of videogames. Immediately, home programmers began cloning these games and had their own creative explosion that gave us such classics as *Wizball*, *Dungeon Master*, *Impossible Mission*, *Time Bandits*, *Choplifter*, *Spelunker*, and the list goes on.

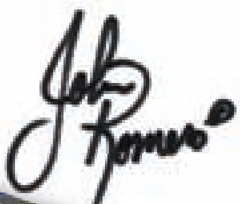
I was fully immersed in this world, and I loved it. Now, these games have all come and gone.

Retro Gamer is here to help you relive that era and learn more about those games through interviews with the creators and in-depth investigation. It's not only great entertainment reading this stuff, but it's important. Why? Because we should be archiving and recording all the information we can about the dawn of this industry, or it will be lost forever.

Hollywood has recently started dealing with the neglect of its earliest works. The great majority of movies from the silent film era have been lost forever due to the use of celluloid film, improper storage, or irreverent disposal. Only during the past decade have the major movie studios taken preservation seriously.

We're better than that. Our industry is purely digital. Storage is cheap, and we're younger than the film industry. We can afford to save our classics and everything else if only we can track down a source copy. More importantly, talking to the creators of these works gives us a complete picture, which cannot be complete with just the game itself. The creative process is important to document, too. **Retro Gamer** gives us all a chance to listen to history and to relive the days when videogames were new.

Enjoy the magazine,





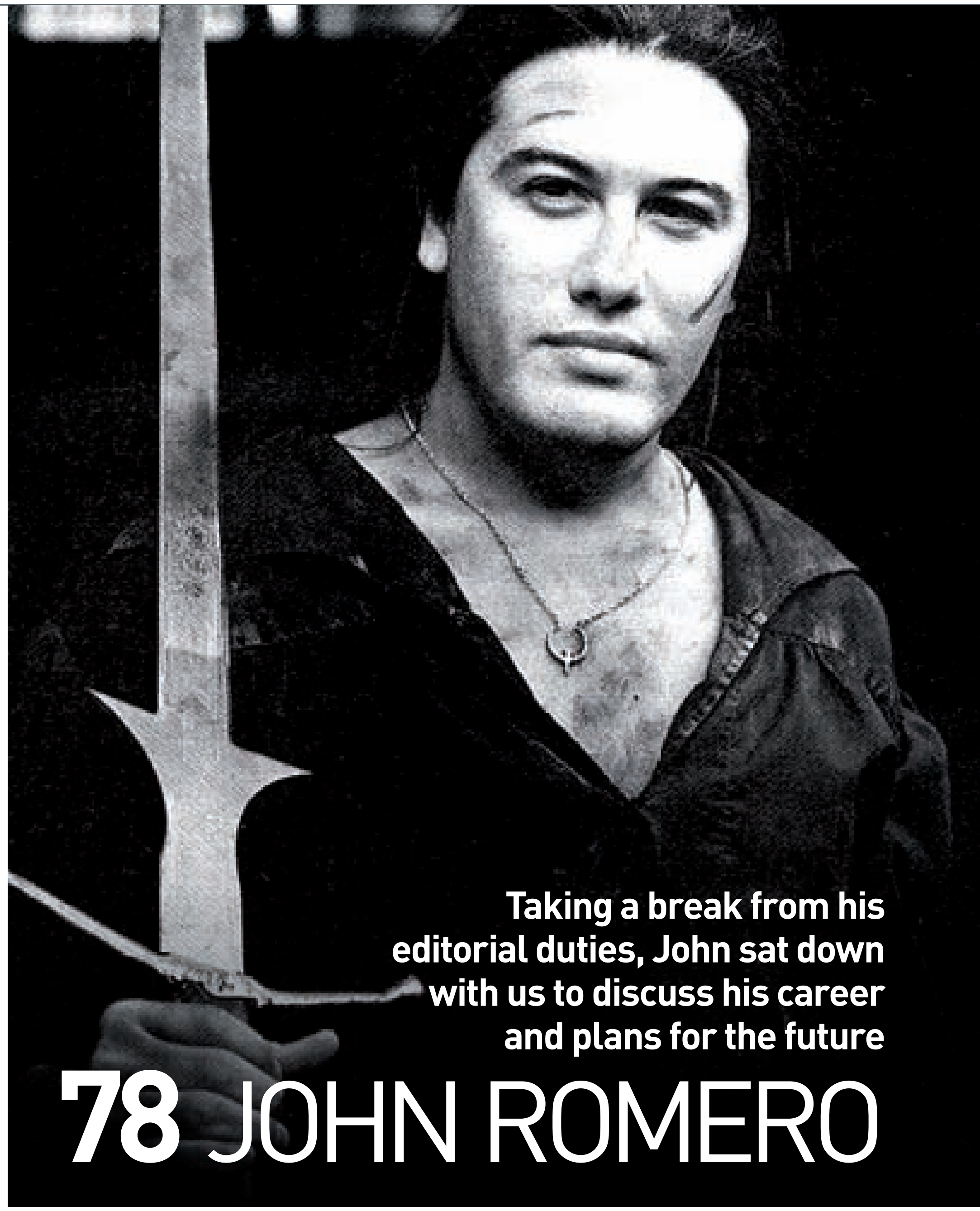
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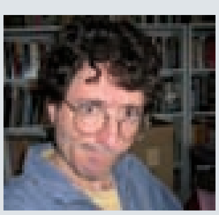
» **Load 75** Breathing new life into classic games

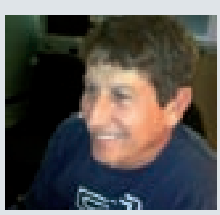
FEATURED

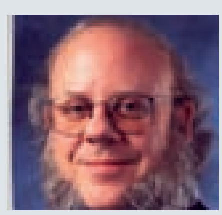
RETRO REVIVALS



In the hot seat this month...







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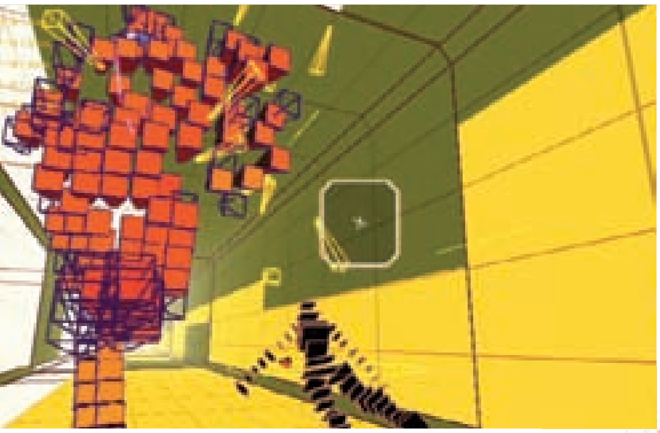
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"One of the greatest on-rails shooters ever"

Darran Jones



28 Classic Game

Sega's *Rez* is quite unlike any other game you've played. Discover why the Dreamcast's shooter remains so much fun to play



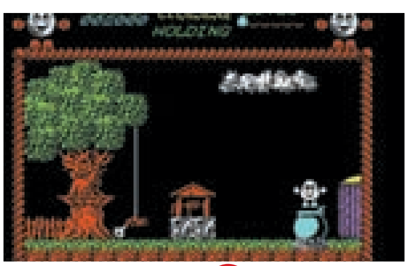
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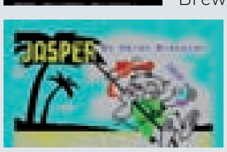
We eggstract the full story of the *Dizzy* series from Philip Oliver

retro GAMER.net READER'S REVIVAL



22 JASPER

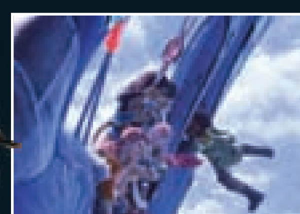
Ian Marks is the latest reader to share his love of a retro classic. This time: Derek Brewster's *Jasper*

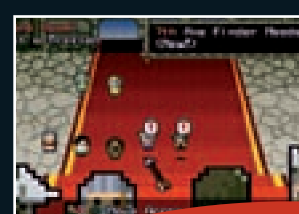




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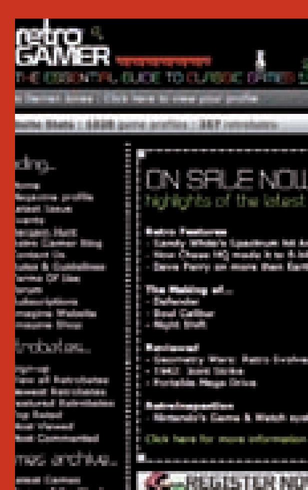
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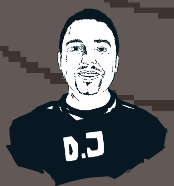
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retro radar

» GIVE US TWO MINUTES AND WE'LL GIVE YOU THE RETRO WORLD



» It's been a bittersweet month for retro news, with the success of RetroVision tempered by the retirement of scorekeeping juggernaut Walter Day and the cancellation of the fan-made King's Quest sequel. Read on to find out if that cloud has a silver lining...

* CONTENTS



RETROVISION 2010

PAUL DRURY JOINS THE FLOCK AT THIS UNIQUE RETRO EVENT

"We've opened RetroVision up to other forums this year to let them bask in its glory," beams VintageMum, co-organiser of the event and currently dressed as a Space Giraffe. "And they're basking thoroughly!"

Climbing the stairs of Oxford's Folly Bridge Inn last month, we too were struck by how RetroVision had grown. Not just in terms of the myriad machines crammed into the darkened pub room or the industrial levels of alcohol consumed, but in the diversity of the crowd.

Born from the Llamasoft-loving YakYak forums, this weekend of gaming, gabbing and guzzling has become a real gathering of the tribes. Acorn aficionados, Commodore crazies and Speccy survivors bond over beer and *Bomberman* like the 8-bit playground wars never happened. Mingling among the flock, we talk to Scott from the Retro Computer Museum about Bletchley Park and cross-dressing and discover how **RG** forumite VinnyM almost became Terry Christian. TimBot and his menagerie of PETs tell us how to turn Commodore's granddaddy into a fish-tank, and Arcadian feels the love with his plans for the Classic Gaming Event Union (**www.cgeu.info**), designed to unite the clans on a regular basis.

"It's my first time here," says SirClive, the man behind last year's Retro Reunited event and union member. "A good retro event needs plenty of beer and plenty of gamers. You don't really need any games, to be honest."

Don't worry, folks – the kit at RV is just as entertaining as the people. We spy such rarities as a Fairchild Channel F and a circulation-stopping Commodore SX-64. A gorgeous pair of Vectrexes nestle near a Neo Geo and we spend ages playing on a ColecoVision containing a handy multi-cart until we find ourselves flanked by Pac-Man and Phoenix Wright, causing us to stare quizzically at our pint.

"I've been doing promotion for RV and visiting all the other shows, spreading the word," explains StarshipUK, the leading light behind this year's event and the man behind the yellow mask. "I was Sonic the Hedgehog at Console Combat."

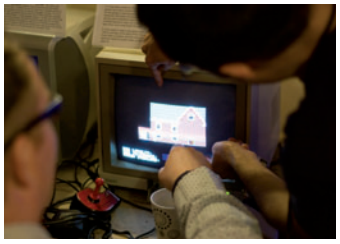
> **"This weekend of gaming, gabbing and guzzling has become a real gathering of the tribes"**

» They came to play… and sing, a bit out of tune.



* GO DEEPER

- » RetroVision began in 2001 and this is the 16th event to be held under its banner
- » While no longer just a Llamasoft event, Jeff Minter's games are always well represented and the man himself occasionally attends
- » For the first time in the event's history, Matt 'Mayhem' Allen went home without a trophy. Sorry, mate



» Discussing advanced techniques on *Hover Bovver.*



» PinkFaerie and Rinoa put their heels down.

"The dressing up is a bit of fun," adds his fellow follower of game fashion and RV collaborator PsychoRob. "I love the *Ace Attorney* games and I want to play a part."

Talking of things to admire, we are dutifully impressed by one RenegadeSi, who spends two finger-numbing hours bashing buttons to break the record on *Track & Field* spoof *Janey Thomson's Marathon*. Why, Si, why? "There's a little trophy and I've always been a sucker for an award," he winks. "In 1988, I entered the US Gold Boys Club championship and came third. A guy called Stuart Campbell won it. You might have heard of him. I was World Games Champion in 1990 at Earl's Court *PCW* show, but this is the first competition I've entered since then. My wife thinks I'm a complete saddo but she doesn't mind me coming to RetroVision as there's no chance of me getting off with another woman. This is just a bunch of mates getting pissed and playing games. That makes it."

Yes, amid the drinking, there was a little healthy competition for those with a penchant for prizes. Frank Gasking proved that he knew a thing or two about games that were, posting high scores on both *Sparse Invaders* for the BBC Micro and Jeff Minter's *Hover Bovver.* JaseyBee took the *King Of Fighters '96* crown while StarshipCommand triumphed in the homebrew tournament thanks to his mastery of the addictive twitch-fest *Lazer Grazer 2.* For those who couldn't bag themselves anything through their gaming prowess, there was always the raffle and the popular 'Table of Crap', a charming jumble of retro treasure and trash you could help yourself to.

RetroVision effortlessly combines the old and the new. Where else could you play on an ancient Philips Videopac G7000 before sampling the high camp *Hole In The Wall* tribute *Muscle March* on the Wii? More than that, though, the event has managed to keep its intimate atmosphere while broadening its scope. The cosplay, communal curry and raucous *Rock Band* sing-a-longs make it feel like a party where everyone is welcomed. There's even a goodie bag to take home.

RV 2011 has been confirmed for 1-3 April next year. Plans are afoot to expand it further, with music from DJ Skitz, a Z-Show reunion, and live broadcasting via SID-loving SlayRadio. Moving the date to later in the year also offers the prospect of 'Beerman's Barbecue'. Go to **www.retrovision.org.uk** to sort yourself an invite.

Thanks to VinnyM and Piku for the photos. ✱



» A nice pair. You don't get many of those to the pound, etc…

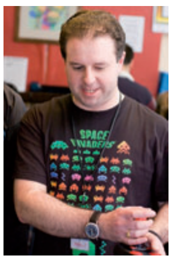
From the Show

» RetroVision Organisers and attendees have their say



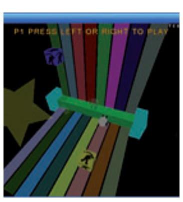
Mark Rayson

"I've taken a year off from organising RetroVision. The boys have done a remarkable job and I'm just here to join in. It feels a bit odd after organising the previous 15. It's difficult to relinquish control as I'm a bit of a control freak. This is kind of my baby and it's like letting someone touch it. But they're very clean. Well, one of them is. Actually, I've been discussing the possibility of a full-on Llamasoft live event completely dedicated to their games from the early days right up to the latest *Gridrunner.* Lots of drunken meetings with Jeff Minter and Giles. As for RV, I'll be back at the helm next year with my green head on!"



Kenz

"I'm here showing the latest Psytronik releases. We do new games for old systems. We started back in 1993, during the decline of the 8-bits, to publish John Wells' *Sceptre Of Baghdad.* Psytronik was supposed to combine the glossiness of Psygnosis with the cheapness of Mastertronic but actually we were crap. 15 years later, I redid the artwork properly and it grew from there. We have a compilation of our first four releases called *They Didn't Quite Sell A Million* and I'm demoing the PC version of *Armalyte.* RV is a great bunch of people, meeting up to play classic games and get pissed."



LamptonWorm

"I coded *Lazer Grazer 2* especially for this show after doing the first one for last year's RV. I didn't want to make a conventional two-player game. You can play this by yourself, with someone else as a team effort, or I had this theory that one person could control both sheep at the same time, like a Jedi mode. I'm also working on *Greedy Bustard,* a shape-dodging abstract game, and *Zedechs,* which uses photos from RV reduced to Speccy resolution. You can download them from **www.lamptonworm.com**. Producing a game for a show gives you a deadline, which is good, and you know that there's a bunch of people that are going to give it a good thrashing."

THE RETRO DEBATE

» What do you think makes a good retro event?

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

psj3809
I voted for the games/systems and meeting other forumites. I must admit in the past I haven't bothered really with the guest speakers, just had a wander round, trying out a few systems and games but mostly meeting people I've known from past events, having a fair bit to drink and a laugh.

Bub&Bob
Topless dolly birds seem to be missing from the poll?

boggyb68
I have been to a few events now and have enjoyed them all. I really appreciate the time and effort a lot of people put in to make these things happen, and it shows the great spirit and passion that exists in the gaming community. My favourite part of the events is meeting other people, familiar or new, and just having a laugh, a few beers and some games. You can't ask for more than that.

Mayhem
I don't play as many games as I used to at these events now. It's as much about putting a pint away while chatting and catching up with folks as it is sitting down and killing alien scum.

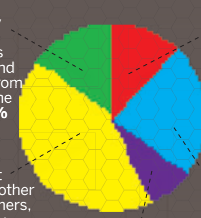
markopoloman
The most important part for me is meeting up with the other forum guys and gals. It is always such a great atmosphere and a guaranteed laugh! Then comes the gaming side of things

the_hawk
From the one retro event I've been to so far I can safely say it's all about the people and socialising. The games and machines seem to come a distant second. It's like travelling to Europe to watch Northern Ireland: the 90 minutes of actual football usually gets in the way of a crackin' trip!

Rinoa
As much as I enjoy trying out new games and systems, these events just wouldn't be the same without all the socialising. Chatting to like-minded people, seeing familiar faces, playing multiplayer games – for me it's all about the atmosphere of these events. Can't wait for the next one!

FORUM OPINION

What makes a good retro event?



retrocolumns

» RETRO RECOLLECTIONS WITH CELEB IAIN LEE

Here's the bio...
Iain Lee has been a fervent gamer since he was tiny. And that was a long time ago. In between playing computer games and collecting crap from eBay, he has presented Channel 4's *The 11 O'Clock Show* and *Rise*, and currently does bits of stand-up as well as presenting the *2 Hour Long Late Night Radio Show* on Absolute Radio at 11pm.



Deathmatch this, my beauties

Did the term 'deathmatch' exist before John Romero? Yeah, probably. I've asked Jeeves and he reckons it has links with wrestling in the Seventies. He also claims that the reference goes back even further to a football match in World War II between Soviet POWs and Nazi soldiers. Man, you do not want to be playing in a football game against Nazi soldiers called 'The Death Match'. I won't bore you with the history, but while the Russians may have won the game, they lost the league, so to speak. But that is according to Jeeves. A failed, internet butler. So take it with a pinch of internet salt.

What I did not know is that deathmatch in the context that us friendly, non-fascist gamers know and love, comes from the brainhole of John Romero. While not actually inventing a word, he did the next best thing and came up with a whole new meaning for one that has superseded all previous definitions.

And it's a word we bandy around like nobody's business these days. Every game has at least 36 different deathmatch variations. Whenever I boot up something on my 360 or PS3, I immediately rush online to jump in an arena, put on my best American accent, and shoot groups of strangers while pretending I'm from Chicago. Trust me, it's a lot of fun.

Did Romero know when he was making *Doom* that this new word was going to influence the gaming community forever? Probably not. He was more than likely being blown away by his ridiculously awesome game. And boy, isn't it good? I don't remember when or where I first played *Doom*, but I think I was late coming to it. I'd given up videogames some time before 1993, and didn't get my mojo back for a while. But I do remember looking at this spectacular thing and thinking 'When did games get this good?' I had a similar epiphany when I saw *WipEout* for the first time and my brief vacation away from gaming was well and truly over.

And *Doom* still stands erect today. Some might argue that it's a little sluggish and the graphics are a bit chunky and pixellated compared to what came later. So what? Everything about it is beautiful. The weapons, the levels, the sounds – they are all so fantastic. What is there not to like about creeping through dark, 3D corridors, blowing the crap out of things?

I find as I get older, fewer and fewer games have what it takes to excite me the way *Doom* did when I first played it. Is it me getting on in years? Or is it that there are fewer genre-defining games? (Balls. I just used the phrase 'genre-defining'. I am now officially a tosser.) I'm not sure, but the fact that I am happy to pay £3.99 to play a 17-year-old game on my telephone says something about its magic.

> Fewer and fewer games have what it takes to excite me the way Doom did

Best non-gaming personality you've ever interviewed? Brian Wilson. He is God and I cried when he started singing *Marcella* to me – my fave Beach Boys song.









» Walter Day founded Twin Galaxies in 1981 and built it up as the authority on gaming high scores.

BYE SCORE

WALTER DAY LEAVES TWIN GALAXIES

Twin Galaxies founder, referee and scorekeeper Walter Day has announced that he will be leaving the organisation to pursue a career in music.

Twin Galaxies, the official scorekeeper for videogame and pinball games, was established by Walter in the summer of 1981. Working as a travelling salesman, he spent time collating high scores from arcades around America during business trips, and with the information formed the Twin Galaxies Scoreboard. A year later that scoreboard was renamed the Twin Galaxies National Scoreboard and made available to the public, quickly making Twin Galaxies the world authority on scorekeeping, player rankings and gaming statistics.

Speaking of his decision to leave Twin Galaxies after almost 30 years at its helm, Walter also announced that the city of Ottumwa, Iowa, the birthplace of Twin Galaxies and self-proclaimed "Videogame Capital of the World", is to host the world's official Videogame Hall of Fame later this year, where around 30 people will be inducted into its prestigious ranks during the four-day festival.

Remarking on his decision to leave Twin Galaxies, Day added: "I like to dream big and shoot for the stars, and that's what I'm doing now. I'm leaving Twin Galaxies and the videogame industry to be a musician, composer, singer-songwriter, and perform my stuff actually on the stage."

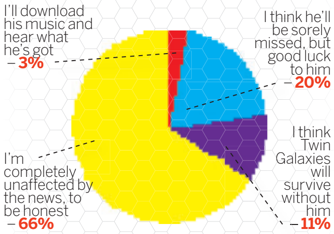
Of course, while many will be saddened by the news that Day is to finally hang up his referee's whistle, this announcement will be less of a shock to those who have seen the rousing 2007 retro gaming documentary *The King Of Kong: A Fistful Of Quarters*, in which the Twin Galaxies founder reveals himself to be quite the keen folk musician in between the unfurling drama that plays out between Steve Wiebe and Billy Mitchell as they battle over the *Donkey Kong* record. Be sure to watch it if you haven't already.



FORUM OPINION

VISIT **RETROGAMER.NET/FORUM** TO HAVE YOUR SAY

Your thoughts on Walter Day leaving Twin Galaxies



"I always thought Walter Day was a bit strange. He looks like the old guy from *Home Alone* with a referee shirt on. In *King Of Kong* I thought he came off as a bit of a nutter" **– davekam**

"It's the end of an era, but I hope Twin Galaxies will go on" **– merman**

"I'm a little saddened by how few people know who he is or who are being negative about him. Were it not for him, we wouldn't have any record of many early high scorers. The man is a legend" **– Antiriad2097**

MICRO BYTES

Snippets of news from the exciting world of retro



» Space Invaders may invade cinemas

Some movie news this month with word that Warner Bros is in talks to adapt Taito's seminal arcade game *Space Invaders* for the big screen. Oddly, while Warner acquired Midway Games last year, and *Space Invaders* was published by Midway in the US, the company doesn't own the rights to the game, so will presumably need to send some flowers Square Enix's way, as it now owns Taito.



» King Of Kong Junior

He may not have beaten Billy Mitchell's impressive high score on *Donkey Kong*, but following the news that Steve Wiebe recently reclaimed the *Donkey Kong Junior* World Champion title by beating the previous record holder Mark Kiel of Enid, Oklahoma, with a score of 1,190,400 points, it's obvious that he's still honing his skills for a new *Donkey Kong* record attempt.



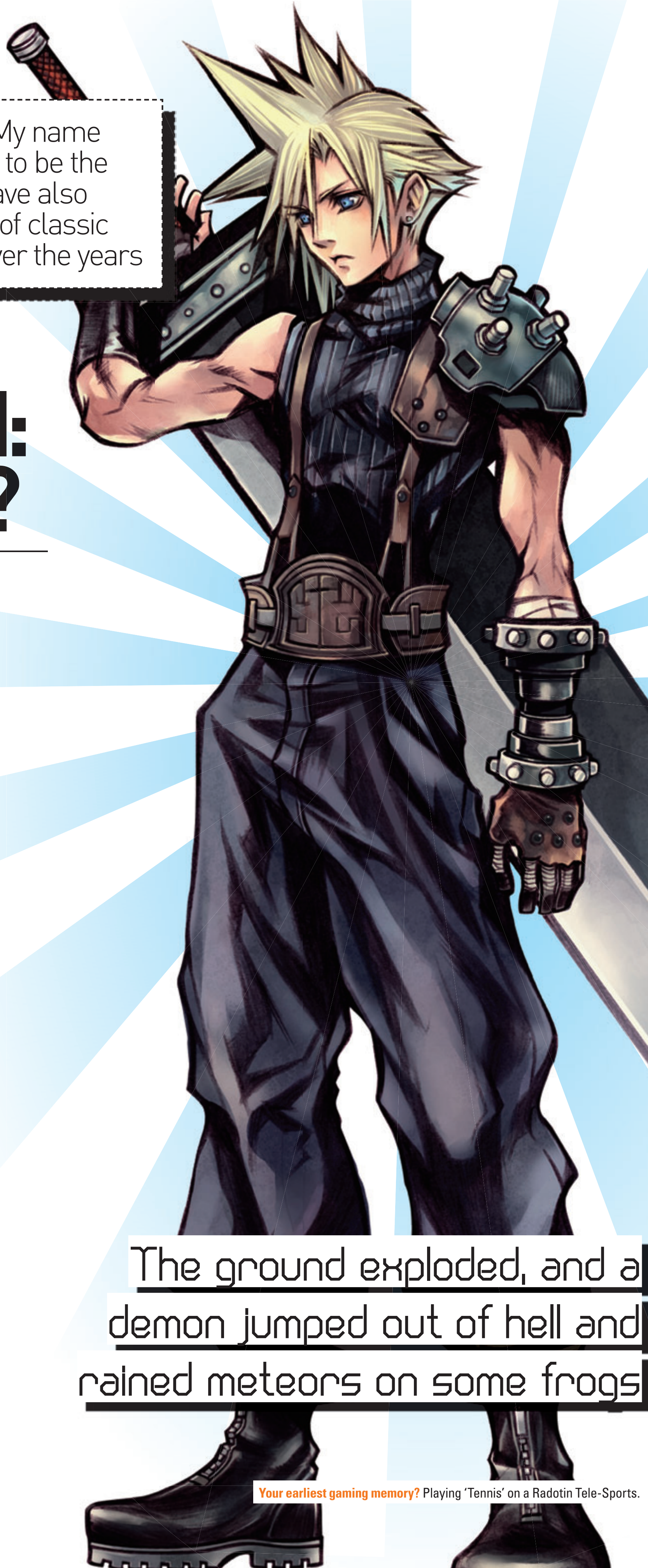
» NES game sells for $41,300

An ultra-rare NES game was snapped up for $41,300 (£27,200) on eBay recently. The game in question, *Stadium Events*, was developed by Bandai for its Family Fun Fitness Mat before Nintendo purchased the North American rights to the peripheral and rebranded it the Power Mat. Although it isn't uncommon in Europe, all NTSC copies of the game were subsequently pulled from shelves and thought destroyed, hence its scarcity.

Here's my bio...
In 1992 I started out on *Mean Machines Sega* and *Nintendo Magazine System*. In 1995 I became editor of *C&VG*. I led the *C&VG* website from 1998 until Christmas 2000, then I left journalism to be concept design manager at Criterion Games. I returned to journalism in 2002 and from 2005 I've been running my own company, Unlikely Hero.



Hello, retro gamers. My name is **Paul Davies**. I used to be the editor of C&VG and have also worked on a number of classic gaming magazines over the years



Final Fantasy VII: How could they?

Three guesses what I'll be rambling on about this month. I make no apology. *Final Fantasy XIII* just came out, so I've gone a little bit *FF*-in' mental.

My god, I'd forgotten just how cool *Final Fantasy VII* really was. In 1997 Squaresoft produced something so far beyond anything else at the time. Mainly it was upsetting. I was a huge Nintendo fan – I'll admit that now. I think this was fair after playing *Mario 64* and *Pilotwings 64*, but the shock of learning that *Final Fantasy* would jump ship was significant. I'd enjoyed *Jumping Flash* and a little bit of *Tekken* on the PlayStation, but this was serious. *FF VII* was already monumental and we hadn't even seen it, other than a demo from SIGGRAPH or something.

I'd played *Final Fantasy VI* and *Secret Of Mana* on the Super NES. *Final Fantasy VII* would be good, but how good? Well, like you wouldn't believe. One of the things I used to love most about working on the games mags before the internet was that you genuinely didn't know about cool stuff until you'd dug it out for yourself. Like, we didn't know about the T-rex in *Tomb Raider*. Stuff like that.

Well, I remember getting that plain white box by post from our guy in Japan. We loaded it up in the office: some CG, pretty music, an old train, a turn-based battle versus a couple of crappy soldiers. We summoned lightning. It looked rubbish. Nobody was impressed but I took it home.

I think it was Ifrit, the first Summon to be captured and tamed. The menus were unintelligible, but the drama was compelling. During one battle in the open field I hit one option, the ground exploded, and a demon jumped out of hell and rained down meteors on some frogs. Holy. Shit.

There were more: Shiva, Titan, and Leviathan; blizzards, earthquakes and tsunamis. I took a few saves back into work after one weekend, then everybody knew why *FF VII* was special. I remember laughing because I couldn't believe my own eyes. A couple of weeks later, I was back with more saved positions, crying this time – well, trying to contain the emotion. Check this out! Look what happens to this girl next…

Sephiroth! His disappearing into the fire and flames of Nibelheim village was only the start of it. We needed Chocobo races and trying to arrange a comedy date between Barret and Cloud at the Gold Saucer to lighten the mood. *Final Fantasy VII* had a spooky mansion, a brothel, a fun fair, and the seaside. It had snowboarding, mountain climbing, and a cute little RTS.

To this day I'm not sure if director Yoshinori Kitase really knew what kind of monster he'd created. Producer Hironobu Sakaguchi was at his most ambitious and inspired. Nothing after *FF VII* has come close. Sony Europe made a complete joke of the PAL version. Now that was upsetting.

Beg, steal, or borrow a US version if you can.

The ground exploded, and a demon jumped out of hell and rained meteors on some frogs

Your earliest gaming memory? Playing 'Tennis' on a Radotin Tele-Sports.

EVERY CLOUD AND ALL THAT

KING'S QUEST FAN PROJECT QUASHED BY ACTIVISION

The *King's Quest* fan project by the Silver Lining team has been canned at the request of licence owner Activision.

Around 2005, the project was blocked by the series' previous owner Vivendi/Sierra, but following legal talks, an agreement was made between both parties, granting The Silver Lining a non-commercial licence for the series and allowing it to continue work on its game. However, since then Vivendi/Sierra and all of its assets have been purchased by Activision Blizzard, and it seems that the game's new publisher is reluctant to continue the previous agreement following months of negotiations.

A statement on The Silver Lining's website read: "After talks and negotiations in the last few months between ourselves and Activision, they have reached the decision that they are not interested in granting a non-commercial licence to The Silver Lining, and have asked that we cease production and take down all related materials on our website. As before, we must and will comply with this decision, as much as we may wish we could do otherwise."

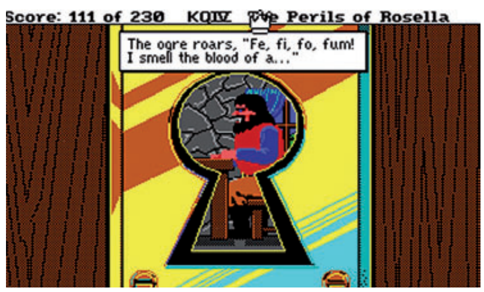
This marks the end of an eight-year-long project, of which the first of five planned episodes was due to be released later this spring.

"We cannot say enough how much we appreciate the support we have had over these years from our fans. Without you, we would never have gotten this far. There would be no game to develop, and no one to develop it for. You have been amazing and steadfast, and we will always remember that and appreciate it more than we can say," continued the statement from the developer.

While many will understand Activision's decision to want to safeguard and demonstrate full control and direction of its IP – under copyright law, if you don't defend your assets you can lose them completely – it will be interesting to see whether this decision has any kind of impact among the *King's Quest* community for potential future official titles in the series released under Activision. *



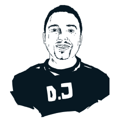
» [PC] *King's Quest IV*, released in 1988, was considered to be incredibly beautiful on its release.





* WHAT WE THINK

Darran



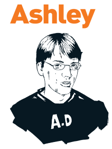
It's a tricky one, this. While it's frustrating that the project has been shut down, despite having the go-ahead from the original owners, Activision does have every right to protect its property. These are the risks these projects run.

Stuart



Can't say I've played any of the games, but I do sympathise with the guys working to get this project off the ground. Hopefully, the work will not go to waste and can be turned into something else, not associated with *King's Quest*.

Ashley



This has been in production for a decade with the blessing of both the original creators and the previous copyright holders, so I can't help but feel really sorry for the team behind it and the people who were eagerly waiting to play it.



WHAT IF?

Your favourite current-gen games remade, retro-style

Subject No 9

Heavy Rain

TREV HAS OUTDONE himself once again, capturing perfectly the style of Quantic Dream's filmic PS3 smash *Heavy Rain,* had it been released a decade ago. Given the game's great visuals, cinema-inspired story and avant-garde approach to the standard, we can only envision that it would have played like the classic Cinemaware titles on the Amiga. Can you imagine the hefty number of diskettes this baby would take to finish?



» [Amiga] If the image looks murky, it's due to Trev using the original Amiga resolution.

Retro Booty

TREASURES FROM THE RETRO DEEP



8-bit Dynamic Life T-Shirt

- **RRP:** $17.99-24.99 (approx £10-12)
- **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

Here's a novel retro game-themed T-shirt, which reveals your health status – in a hypothetical sense, of course – to complete strangers. The shirts behave like Love Birds, and as each gets close enough to another – basically buy his and hers, or his and his, or hers and hers – all five hearts flash red to show their chufftiness in finding a kindred cotton spirit.

Resident Evil Retro Game Mints

- **RRP:** $3.99-9.99 (approx £3-6)
- **Manufacturer:** Boston America
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

While we've never had the pleasure of meeting one, we reckon that a zombie's breath probably shares the same unpleasant and pungent aroma as a sewer rat's feet, or maybe even a summer festival portaloo. Anyway, in the event of a zombie apocalypse, protect yourself from zombie halitosis by lobbing one of these *Resident Evil* mints into their festering gobs.





Coexist T-Shirt

- **RRP:** $15.99-17.99 (approx £10-12)
- **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com

Every console generation brings with it its fair share of fanboyism. People who will happily take a bullet to the nut sack to protect the honour of their beloved games consoles. But why can't we all just get along, eh? As this T-shirt, incorporating various videogame logos to spell the word 'coexist', aptly promotes.

After Burner Complete

- **Price:** £16.99
- **Manufacturer:** Sega
- **Buy it from:** www.genkivideogames.com/index.html

Genki Video Games has a whole host of fantastic off-shore gaming delights for those with a real penchant for import games, and all are reasonably priced too. At the time of writing it had just taken receipt of a Japanese copy of *After Burner Complete*, a fantastic rendition of the arcade smash that we voted the definitive port – discounting the *Sega Ages* and *Shenmue II* versions. Note that you would, of course, need a modified 32X to play it on.



TREASURE OF THE MONTH

Space Invaders Cocktail Cab Money Box

- **RRP:** £59.99
- **Author:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.videogameimports.com



While a little pricey for a piggy bank, we found this miniature *Space Invaders* money box just too impressive not to flag up as this month's treasure. This 1/6 replica of an original *Space Invaders* tabletop coin-op is fully working, and takes 100-yen coins or US nickels, so sadly you'll have to nip down your local Bureau de Change. We've not had the opportunity to see one in the flesh so cannot comment on the build quality or how well the game plays – the shields and formations have been scaled down to compensate for the small screen – but the idea is sound. It might be a bit on the expensive side, but then again with a coin bank this lavish you'll be able to save up the money spent in no time, we're sure.

Joystick with 99 C64 games

- **RRP:** £9.99
- **Manufacturer:** Speedlink
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com

This transparent USB microswitch joystick comes bundled with a disc featuring 99 C64 games, ranging from classics such as *Turrican* and *Ghosts 'N Goblins* to… uh… *Bomb Jack*. Our maths ain't brilliant, but we make that around ten pence a game, divided by a joystick… or something.



Space Invaders TV Game

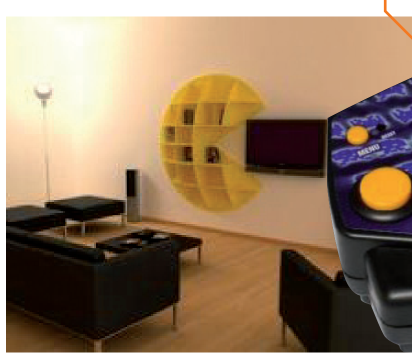
- **RRP:** £9.99
- **Manufacturer:** Radica
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com

We were very tempted to make this item this month's treasure. For a ten-pound note, which is made of paper anyway, you bag yourself this excellent plug-and-play TV game that comes with five built-in classic arcade games, including *Space Invaders*, *Phoenix* and *Qix*. How bargainous is that?

Pac-Man Bookshelf

- **RRP:** request at info@ginepro.org
- **Manufacturer:** Ginepro Design
- **Buy it from:** www.ginepro.org

Pac-Man is the most iconic and most popular yellow circle in the world, so it's little wonder he's still considered a bit of a style icon. This sturdy wooden bookshelf is roughly 170cm in diameter, and is also available in white and black colouring. Why wouldn't you get it in yellow, though?







NES Pad Docking Station

- **Price:** $34.99 (approx £23)
- **Manufacturer:** GeekUnique
- **Buy it from:** www.etsy.com

Given that around 100 gazillion NES consoles were sold in the Eighties, there seems to be no shortage of NES controllers around the planet. Each month we discover how the pads are being put to use in new ways. If it's not NES belts or medallions, it's a docking station for your iPod. Whatever next? Check back next month to find out.

Chocolate PlayStation Controller

- **RRP:** $6 (approx £4)
- **Manufacturer:** Digital Chocolate
- **Buy it from:** www.etsy.com

If Willy Wonka was as much a fan of videogames as he was orange-faced men who like to sing catchy little ditties about badly behaved ruined children, then we're sure that his factory would be filled with tasty delights such as this one here. This PlayStation pad almost looks good enough to use, but we'd still eat it.





Duck Hunt Clock

- **Price:** $12.99 (approx £8)
- **Manufacturer:** 8BitMemory
- **Buy it from:** www.etsy.com

We're not sure whether we can condone the disfigurement of NES games for the good of timekeeping. It kind of goes against everything we stand for here at **Retro Gamer**, but as we're liberal folks, and we can appreciate punctuality, we thought we'd flag up these NES cart clocks. Cannibalistic but cool nonetheless.

Clive Sinclair C5 Mug

- **RRP:** £4.95
- **Manufacturer:** Kapow Gifts
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk

We can't work out why the C5 never overtook the automobile. After all, it was nippy, comfortable, economical to run, looked stylish and had a cool name. Weird, huh? Anyways, Clive Sinclair's ill-fated battery-powered tricycle is commemorated brilliantly in this mug.





Kirby Pillow

- **RRP:** $50 (approx £30)
- **Manufacturer:** sOchoice
- **Buy it from:** www.etsy.com

If we had to use any videogame character for a pillow, it would probably be Kirby. We'd obviously paint him blue first – that goes without saying – but we'd happily rest our weary heads on the lovable chap. Let's hope that he's not a sleep eater, otherwise we could be in for a bumpy night.

TOP FIVE T-SHIRTS



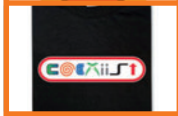
01 Gauntlet
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com



02 Amstrad
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com



03 Pac-Man
- **RRP:** £11.95
- **Manufacturer:** Namco
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com



04 Coexist T-Shirt
- **RRP:** $15.99 - $17.99
- **Manufacturer:** Thinkgeek.com
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



05 Dizzy
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Manufacturer:** Retro GT
- **Buy it from:** www.retrogt.com

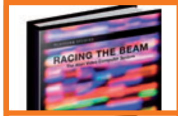
TOP FIVE BOOKS



01 Rogue Leaders: The Story Of LucasArts
- **RRP:** £34.99 **Publisher:** Titan Books
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



02 Classic Home Video Games 1985-1988
- **RRP:** £8.99 **Publisher:** Random House
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



03 Racing The Beam
- **RRP:** £14.95
- **Publisher:** MIT Press
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



04 Game Over
- **RRP:** £22.14
- **Publisher:** Cyberactive Media Group
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



05 Gamespite Quarterly: Issue 3
- **RRP:** From $12 **Author:** Jeremy Parish
- **Buy it from:** www.gamespite.com

TOP FIVE MISCELLANEOUS



01 Pac-Man Hotplate Holder
- **RRP:** $14.99 (£9.23 approx)
- **Manufacturer:** Unknown
- **Buy it from:** www.thinkgeek.com



02 Tabletop Arcade Machine
- **RRP:** Prices vary from £899-1,199
- **Manufacturer:** Elite Gaming
- **Buy it from:** www.elitegaming.org.uk



03 Space Invaders TV Game
- **RRP:** £9.99 **Manufacturer:** Radica
- **Buy it from:** www.play.com



04 Sonic Costume
- **RRP:** £34.94
- **Manufacturer:** Heroes For Kids
- **Buy it from:** www.amazon.co.uk



05 Space Invaders Clock
- **RRP:** $80
- **Manufacturer:** Taito
- **Buy it from:** www.japantrendshop.com

★ A MOMENT WITH...

Dave Grossman

Every issue, we put an industry legend in the hot seat. This month, point-and-click maestro Dave Grossman



Romero Remembers

Dave worked on many of the games that I absolutely loved while I was growing up. *The Secret Of Monkey Island, Indiana Jones And The Fate of Atlantis, Full Throttle…* The list just goes on and on. Seriously, this many classic titles prove beyond a shadow of a doubt that the man is a complete genius.

Who is Dave Grossman?

He's the master craftsman with design credits including *Day Of The Tentacle, Pajama Sam,* and *Monkey Island 1* and *2*, and is now one of the design directors for Telltale Games.

Which of your games would you recommend to our readers, and why?
Day Of The Tentacle for its puzzley goodness, the *Pajama Sam* games for charm, the *Sam & Max* series for overt social commentary, and the *Monkey Island* games for heart.

What is your proudest memory?
One time I was in an elevator and a woman told me that her developmentally challenged son had learned to read by playing *Day Of The Tentacle*. That was cool. Now that I think of it, I felt great but maybe not proud so much as humbled.

What's the most difficult thing you've encountered while working on a game?
Ego. Including my own.

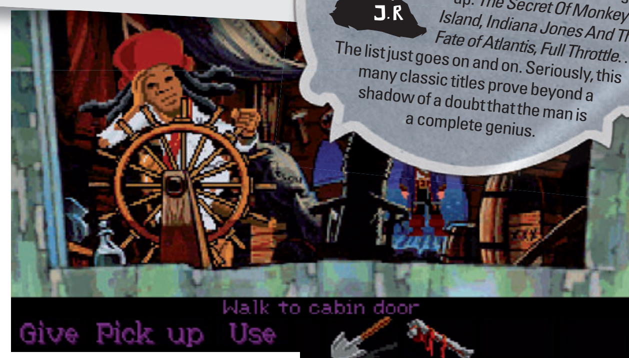
Which industry veteran do you admire?
A few. Shigeru Miyamoto for his realisation of the 'page turner' in game form. Ron Gilbert, who grasped a lot about how story and puzzles come together before other people did. Will Wright, who conjures fascinating abstracted human behaviour out of mathematical systems.

How would you like your games to be remembered?
I hope people will remember them as entertainment of substance and enjoy the experience and laugh where appropriate, but I also hope they'll carry something useful away with them afterward.

Which game do you wish you'd made?
The one that my mother-in-law will want to play.

What opportunities had making videogames given you?
I got to write a few children's books and dabble in toy design. I get to go to other countries. I've met a lot of cool people.

What's your darkest memory of being in the game industry?
I did a consulting gig once with a company in Hollywood. The second time I went down, the guy in charge of the division wanted a meeting. He told me that the games group was about to be shut down. The creepy part was the second day working with people on the project, while knowing that it was dead and I couldn't say anything. I was a focus for hope and the only one who could see the certainty of doom. It was weird and unsettling.



» Having worked on the older games, Dave was involved in *Tales Of Monkey Island* at Telltale.

> "A woman told me that her son learned to read with Day Of The Tentacle"



And your best?
One of the greatest jobs I ever had came from a studio that wanted a tool to evaluate designers they were considering hiring. They had me create a deliberately flawed game design, which applicants would critique. So I had to break as many rules as possible, some obviously and some sneakily. I felt like I was getting away with something the entire time.

Can you share one interesting anecdote about your time in the industry?
Back in 2005, my computer caught fire twice. Money is tight when you're first starting a studio, and apparently we had saved some by buying power supplies made out of cardboard and D batteries taped together.

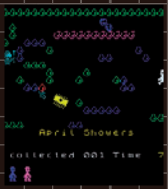
How has the industry changed over the last 20 years?
20 years ago it was a cottage industry and we shipped games to stores on floppy disks. Now we can deliver straight to the consumer over the internet. Machines sitting on people's desks back then pale in comparison to the phones we carry in our pockets today. ★



retrodiary

1 April - 29 April

» A month of retro events both past and present



2 April 1984
■ Software Projects releases *Jet Set Willy* on the Spectrum. Life is never the same again.



4 April 1975
■ A small software development company called Microsoft is founded by William Henry Gates III. It does quite well for itself…



7 April 1986
■ Amstrad buys the manufacturing and marketing rights to all Sinclair computers and products for £5 million from Sinclair Research.



9 April 1984
■ Amstrad announces details of its first home computer, the CPC464. It would be in the shops in June.



11 April 2008
■ *Mario Kart* for the Wii becomes available to Europe and the UK.



11 April 1992
■ Nintendo releases the eagerly awaited Super Nintendo console in Europe. £150 would get you a brand new SNES.



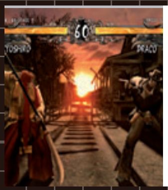
11 April 1985
■ The first issue of *Zzap!64*, a monthly magazine for Commodore 64 owners produced by Newsfield Ltd, goes on sale.



11 April 1983
■ It wasn't from Jupiter and it wasn't that ace either, but £90 would get you a brand new Jupiter Ace micro from Jupiter Cantab.



13 April 1984
■ Apple releases the Apple IIc, its first luggable computer. Perfect for playing *Ultima* or *Zork* in the garden (extension cable not included).



16 April 2010
■ We've never had too much faith in the 3D iterations of *Samurai Shodown*, so we're still not too sure how *Sen* will pan out.



19 April 1985
■ *Bruce Lee*, the splendidly playable platform/beat-'em-up game, is released on the Spectrum by US Gold.



20 April 2006
■ *Mother 3*, the third instalment of the almost Japanese-only RPG – the USA got *Earthbound* – goes on sale for the Game Boy Advance.



23 April 1982
■ Clive Sinclair releases his newest computer, the Spectrum. The 16K model cost £125 with the 48K option costing £175.



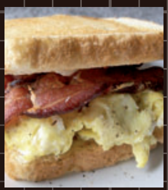
22 April 1962
■ Jeff Minter, the hairiest llama-loving psychedelic programmer of them all, is born.



21 April 2005
■ *Nintendogs*, the real-time pet simulation game, is released in Japan. It arrives in the UK six months later.



21 April 1989
■ Nintendo's new handheld, the Game Boy, makes its retail debut in Japan.



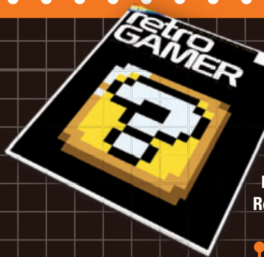
25 April 2008
■ Beer guts and bingo wings were wobbling in fear as Nintendo releases *Wii Fit* across Europe.



27 April 2010
■ Capcom's *Super Street Fighter IV* is set to debut in America, with the European release following three days later.



28 April 1980
■ *Ball*, the first Game & Watch handheld game from Nintendo, is released worldwide.



29 April 2010
■ New issue of **Retro Gamer** hits the streets.

BACK TO THE EIGHTIES

Romero Remembers

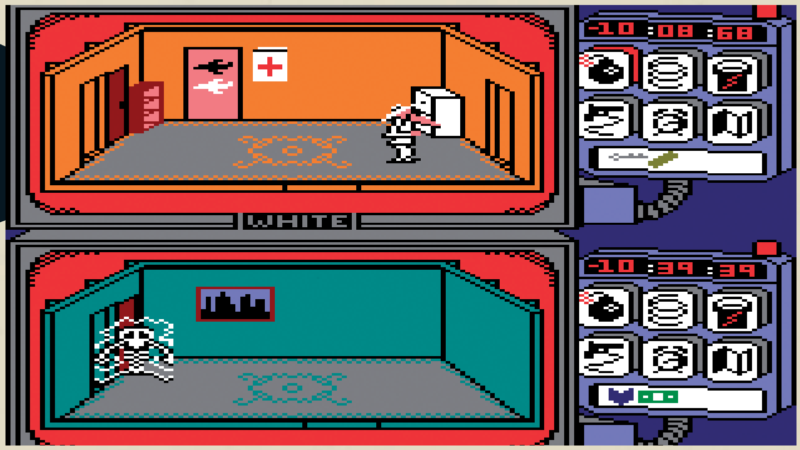


In the mid-Eighties, I was living in England. In Swavesey and Needingworth, to be exact. I remember seeing *Elite* on my neighbour's BBC Micro for the very first time – it was awesome. I also remember watching Steve Davis on the telly pretty much 24/7 playing snooker. Oh, and before I forget: *The Legend Of Zelda: A Link To The Past* – what an amazing game. It remains on my all-time list of favourites.



THE LATEST NEWS FROM APRIL 1988

APRIL 88 – Freescape returns, Virus affects Spectrum, Spy vs Spy x 3, Time Stands Still for Ocean, the French give Blood while Vixen whips up a storm. Richard Burton takes a rest from studying the finer points of Corinne Russell…



» [Amstrad] *Spy vs Spy* was back in a new trilogy compilation. So-so as a one-player game, terrific in two-player mode.

Freescape, the graphics engine for creating 3D environments, finally had a follow-up game to *Driller* and it was due out within a few weeks. The latest episode in the slow-moving but pretty series of games was *Dark Side*, which was set 200 years after the events of *Driller*. Your task was to stop aliens destroying Earth with their super-powered laser.

As usual, the Freescape landscapes were awe-inspiring, but it still had the frustrating feeling of wading through treacle in a sleeping bag. This snail's pace of movement led to a visually stunning but ultimately maddening gaming experience.

The 3D graphical theme continued with *Virus*, a conversion of the Acorn Archimedes game *Zarch*. Programmed by *Elite* creator David Braben, reports that the Amiga, ST and, rather oddly, Spectrum versions were well under way and due out in a few months were good news.

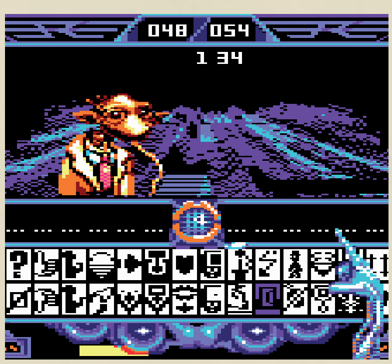
While shooting anything that moved over a colourful wraparound polygon landscape was fun, each version still had its foibles, with the Spectrum obviously suffering significantly in the graphics department. However, it arguably produced the best of the three conversions. The control system was still utterly unfathomable, though…



» They say a picture paints a thousand words, yet just one keeps springing to mind: Phwoarrr!

Databyte announced that it was set to release a compilation of its *Spy vs Spy* games on the Amstrad, Spectrum and C64. The threesome would include the original *Spy vs Spy* game as well as *The Island Caper* and *Arctic Antics*; the latter two hadn't been released on the Amstrad previously.

It was more of the same for the two trap-laying spies, who have perpetually exploded and maimed their opposite number through the pages of *Mad* magazine for several thousand years. Each game offered something a little different, but it was hard to see how Databyte could improve on the original embassy-based game.



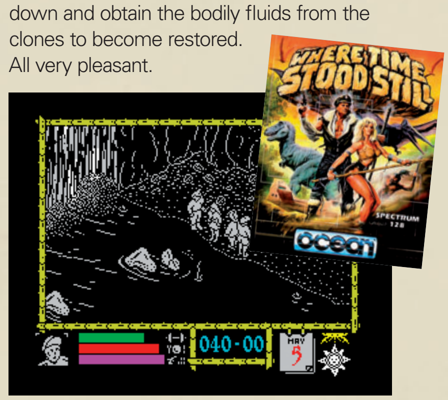
Gamers were once again on full-scale nipple alert with the news that Martech was working on a game called *Vixen*, which would feature the former Page 3 model Corinne Russell on the inlay and accompanying advertisements in suitably skimpy leopard-print attire. There would be a lovely super-glossy free poster too…

Vixen was a horizontal platform-styled whip-'em-up with a shambolic storyline featuring Vixen, the last human. Having been abandoned as a child and raised by foxes, the whip-wielding, bikini-clad, big-haired buxom heroine could morph into fox form thanks to the Fox Sages of old, who bestowed magical powers – and ample norks – upon her. She could now take on the dinosaurs who currently ruled the planet…

The game had good graphics but offered very little else. In fact, that free poster probably saw more action than the game.

Electronic Arts revealed that it was busy developing *The Bard's Tale III: The Thief Of Fate*, the latest in the popular RPG adventuring series, for the Amiga and C64. A few short months later, *Bard's Tale III* was available and was once again impressing. Just a shame that it never made it to a wider selection of systems…

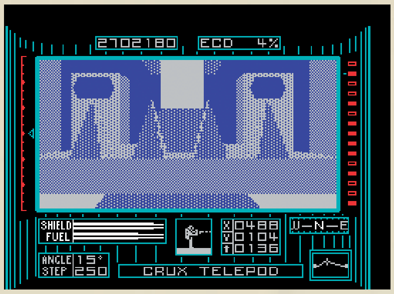
If you wanted quality but eccentric gaming then French company ERE Informatique had the very bundle of oddness in *Captain Blood*. The good captain has been split into several clones requiring Blood, who is dying, to track down and obtain the bodily fluids from the clones to become restored. All very pleasant.



» [Spectrum] *Where Time Stood Still* was another superb isometric effort from Denton Designs and Ocean.



» [Amstrad] *Advanced Tactical Fighter* had just the right balance of arcade and simulation to keep both camps happy.



Captain Blood was a mix of adventure, strategy and *Elite*-styled gaming with a complex icon-driven communication system. Although the graphics were beautifully drawn, the gameplay left many confused, wondering exactly what they were supposed to be doing. A true Marmite game.

Although still under development, System 3 was regularly pestered about the eagerly awaited sequel to *The Last Ninja*, so to appease the press and fans, it issued an update with several tantalising C64 screenshots to whet the appetite.

Although stunning, the screenshots didn't tell us that this was to become a C64 all-time classic, with amazing gameplay and an astonishing soundtrack courtesy of Matt Gray. The Spectrum and Amstrad versions weren't too shabby either.

Developed by Denton Designs and published by Ocean Software, *Where Time Stood Still* bore more than a passing resemblance to previous 3D isometric offering *The Great Escape*. However, the graphics had been improved and the gameplay was much more involved.

You and your party have crash-landed high in the mountains of Tibet. Unfortunately, a time warp means you're all trapped several million years BC, with dinosaurs and cannibals to contend with too.

Where Time Stood Still proved to be terrific, with great graphics adding to the sinister feel, and could be considered a precursor to the survival horror genre. It's just a shame it wasn't converted onto more home micros, with only Spectrum, Amstrad and Atari ST owners feeling the love.

Amstrad Action stuck its Master Game award firmly onto *Advanced Tactical Fighter* (Digital Integration). *Enlightenment: Druid II* (Firebird) was the only Rave winner.

Spectrum magazine *Crash* doled out just three Smashes to *Cybernoid* (Hewson Consultants) and two graphic adventures: *Guild Of Thieves* and *Jinxter* (both Rainbird/ Magnetic Scrolls).

Commodore owners fared little better, with *Zzap!* Sizzling just three games: *Time Bandit* (Microdeal, Amiga), *Strike Fleet* (Electronic Arts, C64) and *4th & Inches* (Accolade, C64).

The only other game of note was the fantastically dreadful *Hunchback* clone, *Kwasimodo* (King Size, Amiga), which attained a highly impressive review rating of 3%, stinking worse than a sweaty pair of Gorgonzola underpants.

1988

APRIL NEWS



» No, not the one with Britney Spears. This is Benny and this was *Crossroads*…

28 April saw a potentially catastrophic midair disaster when the Aloha Airlines Flight 243 suffered a roof rupture. The Boeing 737, carrying 90 passengers and five crew between Hilo and Honolulu in Hawaii, suffered explosive decompression, causing the side and roof sections to be ripped off at 24,000 feet. Despite this loss of structural integrity, the aircraft made it back to Kahului Airport and landed safely. Several passengers suffered serious injuries and one stewardess, Clarabelle Lansing, was sucked from the aircraft once it decompressed.

Investigations later showed serious metal fatigue and corrosion, which caused the adhesive that glued the fuselage together to corrode.

Almost as tragic was the Eurovision Song Contest, held on 30 April in Dublin, which saw French/Canadian singer Celine Dion, representing Switzerland, edging out the UK's entrant, Scott Fitzgerald, by just one point.



» And the in-flight meal was pretty bad as well…

4 April saw the final episode of *Crossroads*, the motel-based soap opera. Despite being infamous for flimsy sets and even flimsier acting, it had developed a faithful fan base over its 24-year run. It was revived in 2001 with a new cast and a handful of originals from the first run. Incredibly, the new show was even more abysmal than the first, and with rapidly declining viewing figures, the plug was soon pulled on *Crossroads* for good.

THIS MONTH IN… CHARTS

ACE



ACE scrutinised betting software to see if your odds at the racecourse or winning the football pools might actually increase. All you would have to do is spend the rest of your life inputting race/match data into the program to create your winning system… or as everyone else called it, a useless database.



COMPUTER & VIDEO GAMES



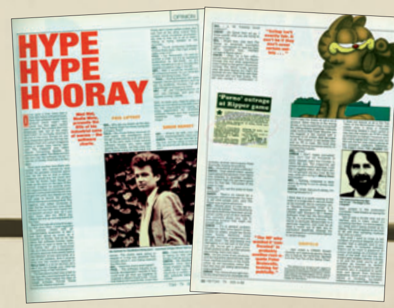
Every mag occasionally swam in the weird waters of the extraneous feature. This was *C&VG*'s turn, with an article on sumo wrestling inspired by the Channel 4 coverage. Still, at least it hadn't promised a follow-up with an analysis of Kabaddi…



THE GAMES MACHINE



Sir Mel of Croucher wrote a fascinating feature on the foibles of Gallup and the charts. Interviews with the hype-merchants shaping the chart and the software house bosses scratching their heads as to how it worked enlightened us to the fact that the whole thing was one great big stitch-up.



APRIL 1988



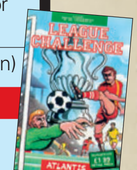
BBC

1. Star Wars (Domark)
2. Winter Olympiad (Tynesoft)
3. Play It Again Sam (Superior Software)
4. Life Of Repton (Superior Software)
5. League Challenge (Atlantis)



AMSTRAD

1. OutRun (US Gold)
2. Magnificent 7 (Ocean)
3. Pro Ski Simulator (Codemasters)
4. Grand Prix Simulator (Codemasters)
5. Match Day II (Ocean)



ATARI

1. League Challenge (Atlantis)
2. Panther (Mastertronic)
3. Pole Position (Atari)
4. Feud (Bulldog)
5. Decathlon (Firebird)

MUSIC

1. Heart (Pet Shop Boys)
2. Drop The Boy (Bros)
3. Love Changes (Everything) (Climie Fisher)
4. Don't Turn Around (Aswad)
5. Could've Been (Tiffany)



BACK TO THE NINETIES

THE LATEST NEWS FROM OCTOBER 1992



OCTOBER 1992 – Sega hires games, Nintendo courts problems, Game Boy turns into Work Boy, Elite consoles itself and Spindizzy loses momentum while Jimmy clears up for Archer. Richard Burton goes in off and fumbles in the pocket for his ball…

Nintendo was once again looking to trudge its well-worn but familiar path to the High Court after Acclaim announced that it wanted to start renting its NES and SNES titles at video shops in a try-before-you-buy deal.

Nintendo's stance was a firm no, insisting that any shop found renting Nintendo games would be reported to FAST, the Federation Against Software Theft, and legal action would ensue. With it being illegal to rent games without the copyright owner's permission, this being Nintendo, any shop found renting out its titles could be potentially prosecuted.

Although considered heavy-handed, Nintendo did have a point in view of recent developments with the emergence of console 'back-up' systems becoming available, such as the Super Magicom from SN Software, which allowed games to be stored on 3.5" floppy disks.

Quite how this would be policed, no one seemed willing to expand on. However, once again Sega managed to take the opposite stance to Nintendo, having already implemented a game hire scheme renting out over 100 of its best Mega Drive, Master System and Game Gear titles using approved outlets.

A new add-on that Game Boy owners could probably live without was the Work Boy. Costing about the same as a Game Boy and almost identical in size as the handheld, this compact keyboard attachment would turn your Nintendo handheld into a personal organiser with word-processing capabilities. Sadly it was about as useful as the calculator digital watch given away by Cascade with its *Cassette 50* compilation.

Electronic Arts unveiled an impressive list of Mega Drive games that were still being worked on but were nearing completion for an anticipated Christmas release. The highlight of the bunch looked to be *Road Rash II*, which looked and played very much like the original with the added bonus of simultaneous split-screen two-player action. Now you could knock your mate's face off with a crowbar at 150mph and see if he makes a decent skid mark as a result…

EA was also converting *Shadow Of The Beast II*, originally released by Psygnosis on the Amiga, which looked beautiful yet suffered from having a ridiculously gruelling difficulty level.

To top off a fine trio of future releases was a conversion of the superb *Lotus Turbo Esprit Challenge*, Gremlin Graphics' racing game for the Amiga and Atari ST. So who would EA utilise to ensure that the quality of the original remained in the Mega Drive conversion? Thankfully, it was Gremlin.

If you were a fan of *Elite*, the aged but golden oldie space-trading game, then prepare to lose your undergarments with the news that Imagineer had converted the classic to the NES.

For your £40 you got a faithful recreation of the 8-bit micro versions along with the addition of a few new bells and whistles, including running secret missions for the

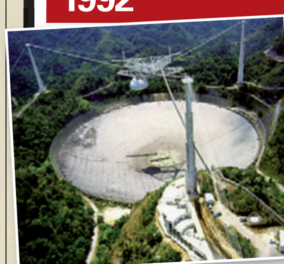


» [Mega Drive] More biking action with police to dodge and fellow racers tooled up for a spot of high-speed GBH.



» [Mega-CD] It looked like *After Burner,* tasted like *Diet After Burner,* but was in fact a complete stomach turner.

1992



» To gamers, Arecibo will always be the Cradle level from *GoldenEye*.

OCTOBER NEWS

12 October saw the start of the High Resolution Microwave Survey at the Arecibo Radio Telescope in Puerto Rico. This would search space for evidence of radio emissions produced by advanced intelligence.

NASA, which ran the project, ended it in 1993 after budget cuts, but private organisations continued with the research and analysis of the data. This was later distributed to computer users worldwide, who would process bite-sized chunks of data via the SETI@home screensaver program.

21 October saw the release of Madonna's notorious coffee table photo book, *Sex*, which would complement her fifth album, *Erotica*, released the day before.

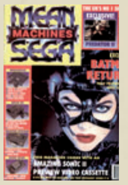
Sex was filled with risqué photographs of the singer doing what she did best: causing controversy. Several enraged organisations attempted to get it banned, but this simply played into Madonna's hands, with all 1,500,000 copies selling within a few days, even though many book stores refused to stock it. Job well done, Madge.

» Not tonight, love. I've got a throbbing head…



THIS MONTH IN...





MEAN MACHINES SEGA

The first new magazine for October cunningly managed to get a preview copy of *Sonic The Hedgehog 2*, the game to cause Sega fanboys to suffer morning glory at its merest mention. *MMS* surmised that it would be the greatest Mega Drive release of the year. To be fair, it wasn't wrong…



MEGA

Again, another newsstand debutant and to kick off it had a rather spiffy interview with Robert Llewellyn (Kryten from *Red Dwarf*), who was being challenged to play *Thunder Force III*. The interview was great but Mr Llewellyn's gaming prowess wasn't. *Mega*'s stunning final assessment? Kryten is crap at *Thunder Force III*.







NINTENDO MAGAZINE SYSTEM

In its first issue, *NMS* scrutinised the hotly anticipated SNES game *Super Mario Kart*. Dissecting the courses, characters, weapons and gaming modes, reviewer Julian Rignall had no doubt that the game was going to be massive. However, he did question its appeal as a one-player game…



» [Mega Drive] Why stop at cracking a puck into someone's face when you can give them a right royal thumping?



» [NES] *Elite* on the NES was everything you wanted from *Elite* plus a bit more.

Intergalactic Navy. So, the same old game in a brand new overcoat… and still the docking sequence was a pain to master.

If you enjoy taking on the brown if the red is covering the pink or chalking your tip with cue in hand then the new conversion of *Jimmy White's Whirlwind Snooker* for the Mega Drive would be enough to satisfy the most discerning snooker fan.

Having been a hit on both the Amiga and Atari ST, the 3D snooker simulator, programmed by Archer Maclean, would again captivate gamers with its realism and trick shots. It's still arguably the best snooker game ever.

There was further Maclean action to be had with reports that his first game, *Drop Zone* on the C64, would be making its way onto the Game Boy and NES.

Another classic game being given the console treatment was Paul Shirley's *Spindizzy*. A new SNES version by ASCII entitled *Spindizzy Worlds* would once again see GERALD mapping the 3D isometric landscapes while collecting energy jewels and solving puzzles. It was a solid conversion for the SNES and a worthy attempt at recreating the magic that the original 8-bit game gave us first time around. Although the pinpoint manoeuvring was still there, the wow factor had departed.

The Sega Mega-CD had been released in Japan in December 1991 and this month Americans got their hands on the Mega Drive add-on. It was also announced by Sega that the Mega-CD, which had been struggling for software up to this point, would exclusively receive *After Burner III*. It did, but it turned out to be a conversion of the Japanese arcade game *Strike Fighter* and as such was disappointing.

In the magazines, *N-Force* granted Knockout status to *Prince Of Persia* (Konami, SNES), *Parodius* (Konami, SNES and Game Boy), *Axelay* (Konami, SNES) and *Super Dunkshot* (Halken, SNES).

In the first issue of *Mean Machines Sega*, *Predator 2* (Acclaim), *Atomic Runner* (Data East), *Smash TV* (Flying Edge) and *NHLPA Hockey '93* (Electronic Arts) all rated highly.

Nintendo Magazine System lavished praise on *Super Mario Kart* (Nintendo, SNES), *Super Hunchback* (Ocean, Game Boy), *Final Fight* (Capcom, SNES), *Zelda: A Link To The Past* (Nintendo, SNES), *Battletoads* (Rare, SNES) and *Super Kick Off* (Anco, Game Boy).



» The Work Boy turned your Game Boy into a Filofax. Best stick to *Tetris*, we reckon…

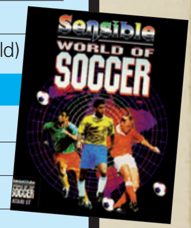
CHARTS

OCTOBER 1992



AMIGA

1 Eye Of The Beholder II (SSI/US Gold)
2 The Games '92: España (Ocean)
3 Sensible Soccer (Renegade/Sensible Software)
4 Civilization (MicroProse)
5 Monkey Island 2: LeChuck's Revenge (Lucasfilm/US Gold)



ATARI ST

1 Sensible Soccer (Renegade/Sensible Software)
2 Shuttle: The Space Flight Simulator (Virgin)
3 Epic (Ocean)
4 Mega Sports (US Gold)
5 Fire & Ice (Renegade/Graftgold)



GAME BOY

1 Terminator 2: Judgment Day (Acclaim)
2 Super Mario Land (Nintendo)
3 Hook (Ocean)
4 WWF Superstars (Ocean)
5 Bart Simpson's Escape From Camp Deadly (Acclaim)

MUSIC

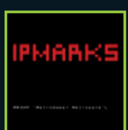
1 End Of The Road (Boyz II Men)
2 Sleeping Satellite (Tasmin Archer)
3 Ebeneezer Goode (The Shamen)
4 It's My Life (Dr Alban)
5 I'm Gonna Get You (Bizarre Inc)



Jasper

BREWSTER'S MINION

#23



» ZX SPECTRUM
» MICROMEGA
» 1984

Derek Brewster was ace! He wrote an adventure column for *Crash*, and without him I'd still be stuck in the goblin's dungeon to this day. He also wrote some great games: *Codename MAT* and *Kentilla* spring to mind.

Jasper, though, goes a little bit of the way to tarnishing the reputation of Mr Brewster. It's an okay game, but it's by no means great.

It's all about a rodent called Jasper and his quest to negotiate 20-odd screens to solve some problem or another. He can carry items and use them to solve problems, so in that respect it's more like Magic Knight's adventures than Miner Willy's.

Good points are that you can use umbrellas to fall down big drops à la *Lemmings*, and swinging across rivers on ropes is also amusing. The graphics are quite nice, but not as good as I think they were hyped to be at the time.

Jasper's jump is a bit odd, in my opinion. He jumps very high in a stilted way, which makes it very difficult to predict where he will end up – usually in a pond, and then Jasper drowns… because everyone knows that mice can't swim, right? Oh no, sorry, they can.

If I'm being picky, which I am, there is also a problem with the inhabitants of Jasper's garden. Along with dogs, cats, birds, bees, etc, there are also polar bears, which strikes me as a bit weird.

In all, there are some good ideas in *Jasper*. It's a bit more *Kokotoni Wilf* than *Jet Set Willy*, but if you enjoy platform games and haven't played it then it's probably worth a load. It is, however, frustratingly hard. We seemed to put up with this more in the Eighties, but my 2010 mind can't be doing with it any more, and once I'd died for the 100th time I decided to leave the game to its own devices.

Crash magazine gave this game a score in the 90s, and made it a *Crash* Smash. I wouldn't go that far myself – it's probably worth about 70% at a push, or more likely 60%. Still, it is quite pretty to look at, and some of the enemy graphics, particularly the cat, are very well-animated.

You might like it more than I do, but even though I'm not overly keen, its author Derek is still a retro gaming god in my opinion.



RETROBATE PROFILE

» **NAME:** IAN MARKS
» **JOINED:** 17 AUGUST 2008
» **LOCATION:** EAST MIDLANDS
» **OCCUPATION:** NOT GIVEN
» **FAVE GAME SYSTEM:** ZX SPECTRUM

Want to appear in the magazine? Be sure to upload your classic profiles at **www.retrogamer.net**

THE MAKING OF…

The Addams Family



Stuart Hunt does a spot of digging… grave-digging, that is. We enlist the help of James Higgins and Warren Lancashire to unearth Ocean's ghoulish platformer, The Addams Family



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** OCEAN
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLATFORM:** SUPER NINTENDO
- » **RELEASED:** 1992
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORM ADVENTURE
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** A FEW QUID
- » **BY THE SAME DEVELOPER:** NAVY SEALS



While Ocean Software was responsible for a few film-inspired gaming flops in its time, particularly during its fledgling years, thanks to quality games such as *RoboCop, Batman: The Movie* and *The Untouchables*, the Mancunian software house quickly found itself the go-to company for film studios wanting to turn movies into money-spinning computer games. Between the late Eighties and early Nineties, if you saw the trailer for a big-budget blockbuster coming soon to cinemas, you could bet your grandmother's legs that its game spin-off would be handled by Ocean. And so, following a delayed Christmas break caused by lending hands to a rushed redo of *Total Recall* for the Spectrum and Amstrad, Warren Lancashire and James Higgins returned to work and were quickly handed the next assignment to be pushed through Ocean's busy production gates. Warren remembers the moment well.

"Gary [Bracey] strolled into our office and said something to the effect of, 'Your next project is an Amiga game based on the new *Addams Family* movie. You've got two months.' Gary outlined the film's plot, told us the movie was going to be huge – as he did for every movie licence we worked on, including *Navy Seals* – and asked us to 'come up with some ideas for tomorrow'."

With time short, James and Warren quickly set about coming up with a game



concept that would appeal to the film's audience while also capturing the comical and kooky spirit of the Addams Family themselves, and rapidly brainstormed ideas with colleague Simon Butler.

"There were early discussions of doing *The Addams Family* in the style of *Pyjamarama*. That was Simon's idea and it could've worked too, but every game I was playing at the time was telling me to do a cute platformer. I remember playing a lot of Japanese-style platform games on the NES and 8-bit Sega, like *Alex Kidd, Athena* and *Wonderboy*," recalls Warren.

With the plan to make *The Addams Family* a cutesy platformer, the team's next job was to conjure up a story that would tie in with the events in the film and lend itself to the platform genre. But this was a challenge in itself: as was typical when developing film licences back then, they received little direction from the movie studio with regard to how the game should look and play.

"We'd sometimes get access to the movie script and storyboards, but I don't

recall us getting either for *Addams*, at least not in time to use," says Warren. "I remember having photographs of the cast. We ran mostly on memories of the TV series and the original Charles Addams cartoons."

"Yeah, I don't remember any specific input," adds James. "I think all we had was the script and some set photographs and colour transparencies. For the most part I think we were left to do whatever we pleased. The story of Gomez finding his family was just us taking the basic idea of the family having been evicted from the Addams residence in the movie and Gomez attempting to return them to their rightful place in their home."

With a story figured out, work on the game could finally begin. The team working on *The Addams Family* comprised James as programmer; Warren on level design and art duties; Simon Butler supplying many of the enemy sprites; and Jonathan Dunn, who was drafted in late into the project, handling the music and sound effects.

"I also have to give some credit to John Brandwood," James adds. "He was the programmer that developed the map and sprite editor tools we used on the project. He's one of the founders and current president of Left Field Productions – developers of *Excitebike 64* – with Mike Lamb. John sits one desk away from me now, so it's best I don't forget his contribution."

No sooner had work on the game begun, though, did Ocean make the decision to move the entire project to the Super Nintendo, which had recently been released in Europe at the time. But while this news could have easily deflated the mood inside camp, it actually had the opposite effect on the team. The opportunity to write a game for Nintendo's glittering new 16-bit console was one that James and Warren relished, and so, after taking receipt of a brand new SNES dev kit from Nintendo, the pair were eager to recommence work on the game, starting everything from scratch, and only retaining the original Gomez sprite that Warren had created.

In the game, the player assumes the role of Gomez, the patriarch of the Addams Family, and must explore the many rooms and grounds of the Addams's spooky mansion home to find the remaining family members who have mysteriously gone missing. The game's plot was loosely inspired by the final section of the movie, where the family's deceitful attorney, Tully Alford, evicts them from their home in order to break into the family vault.

Warren and James confess that *Super Mario World* had a big influence on the look and gameplay of *The Addams Family*, although the similarities should be plainly obvious to anyone who's played both games. With Gomez dispatching enemies through the art of head-stomping, collecting dollar signs to beef up his high score, butting switches to open doorways, and making use of various power-ups – the standout being the Fezcopter, which bestowed Gomez with the power of flight – the similarities between Gomez and Nintendo's Italian butterball are quite uncanny.

"All we had was the script and some set photos to work with"



» [SNES] Gomez could find and use a number of power-ups on his travels, including the handy Fezcopter, which sadly doesn't exist in the real world… yet.



» [SNES] The gothic Addams mansion, with its dark secrets and hidden treasure, provided a perfect setting for a videogame.

Over the course of the game's development, it was becoming apparent to the team that Ocean was regarding the *Addams Family* licence as a pretty big deal. The game would receive regular focus-testing, which James told us was unusual for the time. Well… focus-testing in the Ocean sense anyway.

"I remember Gary coming over to our little corner and playing the levels for a few hours at night before he went home for the day. Warren and I then had to get some work done

THE ADDAMS FAMILY

before rushing off to catch the last bus home. Gary did make that up to us with a rather nice trip to New York and DC Comics," adds James.

The Addams Family took around four months to write and, impressively, this time included James and Warren getting to grips with how to program for the Super Nintendo. So given the platform switch, and the game's astonishingly quick turnaround, we're guessing there weren't too many headaches or bugs to fix along the way?

"I don't remember any specific coding technical issues," says James. "I seem to remember that the audio presented a lot of the problems. Back then to actually get samples converted for the SNES you had to record them onto DAT and send them to Nintendo. They would then use some expensive Sony hardware to process the files and send back the disks. Then we could integrate them into the sound engine. I'm sure this was reverse-engineered at some point so we could skip this process on subsequent titles. Apart from that, there were the numerous frustrations in trying to get some things working; simple things like getting the jump to feel just right."

Warren interjects: "*Mario* was inspiration for how not to implement the jump. At the time, I didn't understand why Mario's jump was so difficult to control. We went the opposite way and designed the jump to be as manoeuvrable as possible. The other similarity, of course, was the moustache."

With the SNES version complete, Ocean set about porting the game across a whole multitude of game platforms, giving Warren and James the opportunity to finally finish the project that they had initially started on the Amiga.

"The Amiga and ST versions were relatively quick ports – a matter of weeks," explains James. "The only trick that I remember we did was running the main player sprite on the Amiga at 60/50 frames per second and the rest of the scrolling at 30/25 frames per second. This was an idea suggested by Mick West, who went on to be one of the founders of Neversoft (*Tony Hawk* and *Guitar Hero*)."

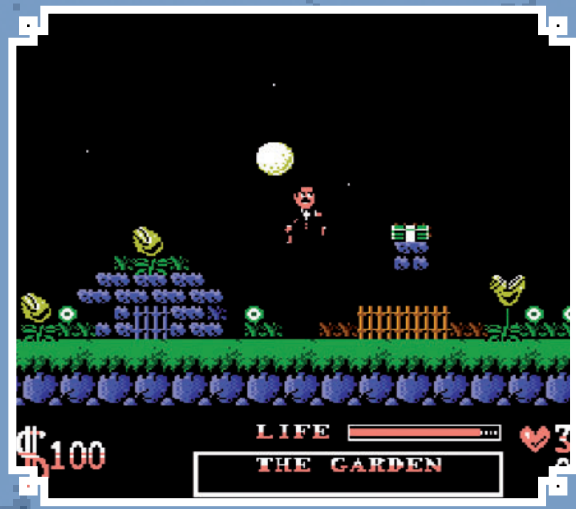
Warren brings up an interesting point about the timing of the game's Amiga release: "Had we released when originally planned, *James Pond* wouldn't have stolen our thunder."

The Addams Family was well-received by the gaming press on its release, with many reviews singing the game's praises for being a well-crafted platformer. It certainly ranked as one of the most refined 16-bit platform games to come from a UK developer at the time, and captured the mood of the film perfectly. As such, it was another successful film-to-videogame translation by Ocean. And James and Warren's reaction to the positive feedback that the game was receiving?

"I couldn't read the reviews," says Warren. "Jamie would wind me up by reading reviews out loud."

James, on the other hand, was a little more confident about the game: "I was thrilled by the reception the game got. When we finished it I remember we got a score from the Mario Club [part of Nintendo's certification process] that was pretty high – only a few short of *Super Mario Bros*, which seemed to cement the fact that it was a good game. Internally it was pretty popular too – even at the end – which is always a good sign."

After finally wrapping up work on *The Addams Family*, the team stayed together to write *The Addams Family: Pugsley's*



» [NES] The NES, Master System and Game Gear versions of *The Addams Family* differ significantly from the 16-bit versions. They feature redrawn sprites and different levels.



SAME NAME, SLIGHTLY DIFFERENT GAME

GIVEN THE POPULARITY OF the movie, *The Addams Family* received a plentiful number of ports across various formats, and some actually differ slightly from the original Super Nintendo version. Both the NES (developed by Oceansoft) and Master System (Arc Developments) conversions kept the platform gameplay and 'rescue' story but featured redrawn sprites and different level arrangements. In these versions Gomez is also given a health bar and access to an inventory, which actually makes finishing the game quite a bit easier. By far the most peculiar iteration, though, is found on the TurboGrafx-16 CD. Developed by ICOM Simulations, this version is a completely different game entirely. It's still a platformer, but the role of protagonist is played by Tully Alford, the Addams's lawyer and villain in the movie, while the role of villain… well, you can probably work it out for yourself. It did boast some excellent audio, though, and is nicely presented, as the action is displayed as if there's a cinema audience watching it on screen – a bit like those dodgy illegal copies of movies shot inside cinemas… except the picture quality is fine and ownership of it isn't illegal, as far as we're aware.









» [Amiga] The guys started the Amiga version first before Ocean decided, early into the game's development, to switch the project across to the SNES.



» Warren works as an Art Director at TT Fusion, a software house who has worked on the many Lego games.

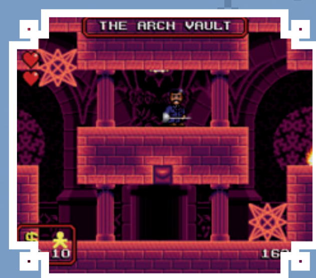
HANDY ANDY... ACTUALLY MAKE THAT SIMON

THOSE WHO'VE PLAYED *The Addams Family* may remember the game's cartoon intro, which saw Thing pop out from a box to invite players into the game. We were curious as to who was responsible and whose hand it was that stepped in to play the role of Thing.

"I believe Simon knocked up the whole hand opening sequence in record time one weekend toward the end of the project," recalls James. "I'm also sure that was his hand beckoning you into the game – not sure if he digitised this or did a series of Polaroids. I'd also like to apologise for the horrible fireworks sequence at the end of the game. We were really rushed for time and that was all my shoddy work."



» James can now be found at Left Field Productions, an independent game studio based in California – obviously not where this photo was taken.





"Pugsley is technically superior in every way, but as a game it's just not as good"



» [SNES] The team all stayed together to work on the game's sequel, *Pugsley's Scavenger Hunt*.

Scavenger Hunt. It was programmed by James, with Simon Butler once again lending a hand (see 'Handy Andy'), and Warren continuing work on level and art design, this time alongside John Palmer and Jack Wikely.

"*Pugsley's* was really more of the same, but much harder," James adds. "At that point we had a much better handle on the tricks you could do with the SNES and we probably spent too much time playing with cool visuals than refining the gameplay. *Pugsley's* is technically superior in every way, but as a game it's just not as good in my opinion."

Warren adds: "For the sequel, I did a new Gomez sprite in a fetching purple waistcoat, but in the final two weeks of development, marketing decided they wanted one of the kids to be the focus of the game, so Simon created the Pugsley sprite in record time."

For the official videogame tie-in to the movie sequel, *Addams Family Values*, the game was handled by a completely different internal team at Ocean. At the time James and Warren were assigned to work on other projects, including the infamous *Lobo* game that Ocean was planning to write for DC Comics – a project that sadly never materialised but would give James one of his fondest memories of *The Addams Family*.

"When Warren, Gary and I went to New York to visit DC Comics about the *Lobo* game, on one of our free days I discovered a book store that had a solutions book with 28 pages dedicated to *The Addams Family* inside. There was something exciting about the fact that our work was worthy enough that it required 28 pages. Seeing that was a real buzz."

Both Warren and James still work in the industry today. Warren is now an art director at TT Fusion, hard at work on the next *Lego* brickbuster, while James now resides in the US, where he's the CEO and development director of Left Field Productions, a small developer founded by his former Ocean colleagues Mike Lamb and John Brandwood. Left Field is responsible for excellent dirt-bike racer *Excitebike 64* and is currently putting the finishing touches to a brand new *Destruction Derby*-style racing title for the Xbox 360, PS3 and Wii.

THE CLASSIC GAME

Rez

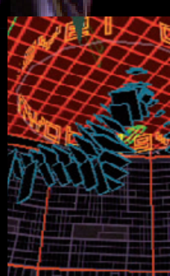


Initially known as *Vibes*, *Project Eden* and the *K-Project*, Tetsuya Mizuguchi's secret assignment transmogrified into the truly astonishing *Rez*. Released simultaneously on both the PS2 and Dreamcast, it was further proof of Sega's brilliance and how studios like United Game Artists flew in the face of expectation in order to deliver highly innovative, utterly unique videogames. Some regard it as the highest form of videogame art that's currently available, while others see it as a bland and soulless shooter.

While we wouldn't really agree with either, there's no denying that Mizuguchi's game is one of the most enthralling experiences around, and while it certainly isn't to everybody's taste, it remains one of the greatest on-rails shooters we've ever played. Join Darran Jones then as he examines the majesty that is Sega's *Rez*.



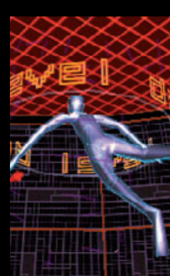
ZERO FORM
Get hit in this spherical form and it is game over for you. Needless to say you better be careful.



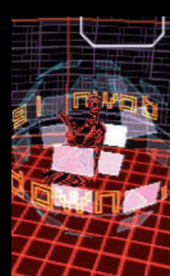
FIRST FORM
Taking on the shape of a humanoid, you need to evolve from this form as quickly as possible.



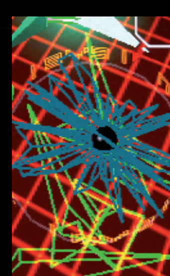
SECOND FORM
Now you're getting somewhere. You still look fairly basic but you're definitely starting to evolve.



THIRD FORM
Your fully formed humanoid shape, looking very funky. Your next ascension is even weirder.



FOURTH FORM
This is our favourite evolution, as it reminds us of that spaceship in *Flight Of The Navigator.*



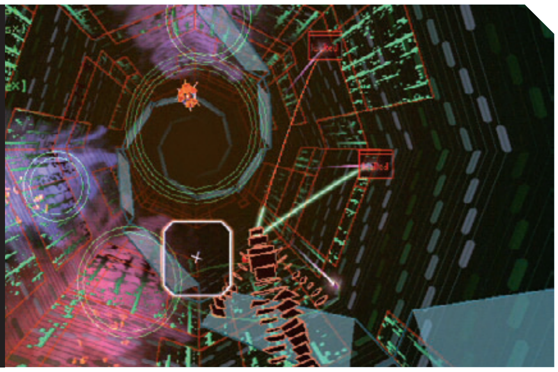
FIFTH FORM
This jagged amoeba is a step away from achieving oneness. It also reminds us of a Futurama episode.



SIXTH FORM
Your final form is quite possibly the creepiest of the lot, looking more than slightly foetal.

MEMORABLE MOMENTS

WHY IS IT A CLASSIC?



Fusion Frenzy

Everything, really. *Rez* initially appears to be a simplistic, linear on-rails shooter, but completion of each stage and the opening of subsequent score attack modes reveals that it's anything but. Then there's the incredible atmosphere, beautiful abstract imagery and tightly honed gameplay. Ultimately, however, *Rez* excels due to the way it skilfully weaves game and sound design to create one of the most enchanting, enthralling videogame experiences around. If you haven't played *Rez* on a big TV screen, with the lights off and the audio blaring out of your sound system, you really haven't lived.

BEST MOMENT



Layer Cake

Rez is full of wonderful moments, but one of the most impressive is when you break through a new layer. Each level typically consists of ten stages that slowly add more visuals and enhanced music as you pass through them. Hit a waypoint and your avatar gets thrust forward; the screen melts away and the audio goes into overdrive. It's a totally mesmerising effect that still fills us with excitement to this day. The transition is made all the sweeter by the tactile rumbling, should you have the relevant peripheral equipped, which further immerses you in the on-screen action.

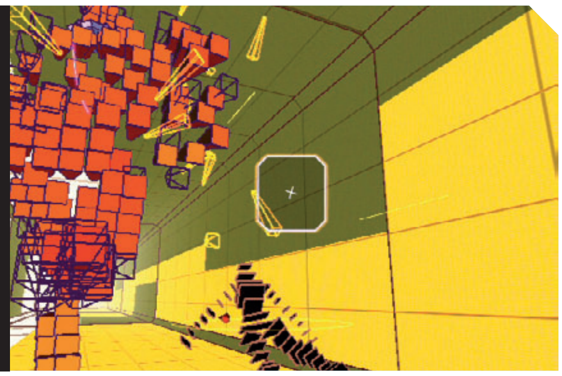
BEST LEVEL



Evolution

Each of *Rez*'s levels dwells in the memory long after they've been completed, but it's the final stage that leaves the biggest impression. It's essentially an evolution of life and, as Adam Freeland's superb track *Fear* builds in the background, you're treated to some of the most wondrous visuals to ever appear on Sega's machine. Initially you're passing wispy, unfocused images, with your journey starting off in the sea. As it progresses, however, surroundings take on more substance, you're eventually thrust upon solid land, and the level's final moments take place high above the Earth's surface. Simply magnificent.

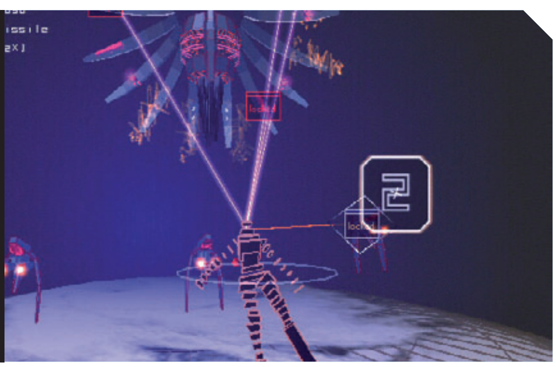
BEST BOSS



The Running Man

Rez is filled with unique boss encounters, but if we had to pick a favourite it would easily be the monstrosity found at the end of Stage 4. Flying through a twisting maze of blocks, you encounter a UFO that constantly changes shape thanks to the huge number of blocks that it drags behind itself. Eventually the huge mass solidifies and turns into a gigantic sprinting man that powers its way through long, winding tunnels as you struggle to keep up. It's a breathtaking encounter that's made all the better by the thumping soundtrack that accompanies the action.

BEST MUSIC



"It's A Mind Killer"

It seems a shame to once again credit *Rez*'s fifth stage when every level in the game is an audial and visual delight, but no other track matches the sheer majesty of *Fear*. Skilfully layered to match the on-screen evolution, it slowly builds in tempo and evolves just as much as the action. One minute it's dark and exceptionally moody; the next the sheer beauty of what you're hearing can lift your spirits. It's a masterful track that once again proves just how skilful Mizuguchi and the rest of United Game Artists were at blending gameplay and music for this game.

WEIRDEST VERSION



Feel The Vibe

If there's one thing that makes *Rez* stand out from every other game it's the Trance Vibrator, packaged with the PS2 special edition. The USB device would pulse in time to *Rez*'s music, with far more power than a DualShock. Although designed as a way to extend the synaesthesia, it has reportedly been used for… ahem… naughtier things. The device was also compatible with Sega's *Space Channel 5: Part 2* and Irem's *Disaster Report*. *Rez HD* owners can pull off a similar, more powerful effect by using up to three additional 360 pads and strapping them to various parts of their body. We kid you not.

What the press said… ages ago

Play (73%)

"In wishing to both typify and exaggerate the visual style of a bygone age, *Rez* ultimately commits the cardinal sin of placing graphics before gameplay – a facet attributable to Sega's desire for the title to be seen as art."

NTSC-uk (9/10)

"The fact that the game can stimulate such debate and wonder and remain, even now, huge fun to play is something for Tetsuya Mizuguchi and his very talented team to be rightly proud of."

What we think

Rez is definitely a Marmite experience, but there's no denying that it remains an incredibly accomplished piece of work. No other videogame has ever managed to successfully combine vision, gameplay and audio like *Rez* did, and while Mizuguchi has come close many times since, *Rez* remains easily his greatest achievement.



IN THE KNOW

- **PLATFORM:** DREAMCAST/PS2
- **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- **DEVELOPER:** UNITED GAME ARTISTS
- **RELEASED:** 2001
- **GENRE:** SHOOT-EM-UP
- **EXPECT TO PAY:** £40+

RETRO SHAMER

» EXPOSING RETRO GAMES THAT ARE PROBABLY BEST LEFT IN THE PAST

THE SCOUT STEPS OUT



» [CPC] Apparently, for its time this game became a popular title among joystick wogglers. (Oh dear – Ed.)

GAME INFO



- » **SYSTEM:** CPC
- » **RELEASED:** 1985
- » **PUBLISHER:** AMSOFT
- » **GENRE:** SCOUT SIMULATOR

Romero Remembers

Strangely enough, I had a game featuring a boy scout published in 1984 titled *Scout Search*. It was my first published title and appeared in *inCider* magazine.



» [CPC] The game features realistic water physics, with your little scout character floating to the surface of the water, so you'll need to use the surroundings intelligently to collect all the sea-life samples.



A WORD FROM THE HERO

"I'm sure many of you used to be a scout back in the day so will appreciate the hard work I have to go through every Tuesday night to wear this uniform. Being a scout isn't just about kicking a football, learning to tie a sheep shank, or building bivvy camps out of forest waste; it's about cleaning windows, retrieving stolen property and avoiding those jerks from *Yellow Submarine*."

The Amsoft label was responsible for releasing some pretty abysmal games in its time. For every *Harrier Attack* that it published, an *Animal Vegetable Mineral* was never far behind to mess things up. While *Bridge-It* – for all intents and purposes, just the Game & Watch title *Manhole* with load times and music that can shatter whales' teeth – ranks as one of the publisher's worst titles, this month we thought we'd dedicate this page to this little underplayed un-gem instead.

The Scout Steps Out isn't a particularly awful game, but it drops the ball many times. The premise is simple enough, and probably quite original in its day: you assume the role of a scout who must venture out into the wilderness to complete a number of tasks and good deeds. These include collecting mushrooms for camp tea, cleaning the grubby windows for pensioners too lazy to get off their backside to do it themselves, diving for sea-life samples, reclaiming stolen award shields, and fixing the camp radio so that his little camp buddies can listen to the Top 40 while he's out risking his life.

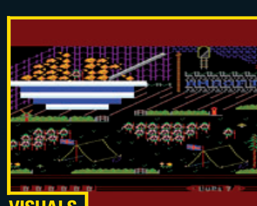
The gameplay is basically a top-down version of a *Jet Set Willy*-style game, with your little scout sweeping up various objects while avoiding bizarre-looking meanies that jitter around the screen and make no sense within the context of the game – the highlight has to be the things that look like the Blue Meanies from *Yellow Submarine*, but pink. To paint the game as surreal really is a bit of an understatement. The first screen sees your character surrounded by his scout chums all stood in orderly lines, and above them sits a giant bowl of cornflakes. The cornflakes can be eaten to award you extra lives, with your tiny scout sprite making his way to the top of the screen and jumping on the spoon and into the bowl of soggy corn to claim his extra goes. And the player can return to this screen at any time to restock on lives too, which is very handy given that the game is so bloody maddening.

While it's clear that a degree of thought went into the presentation and visuals, the game seems to be in this constant battle with its own perspective, making working out where to go and how to get around the game a bit confusing at times. Some screens seem to abide by the physics and rules of a side-scroller, others a top-down, while some play by their own rules, requiring the player to rub their little scout sprite around the screen to work out which sections can be accessed and which cannot.

Add to this some frustratingly slippy controls and extremely unforgiving enemies, many of which sporadically shift around the screen unfairly with little rhyme or reason, sometimes even parking up beside your sprite but, like a T-rex, choosing not to actually attack you until you make a sudden move. Making matters worse is the game's poor level design, which gives the impression that you safely avoid enemies by climbing up random bits of ladder, but not allowing you to climb high enough to avoid the grasp of the marauding enemies.

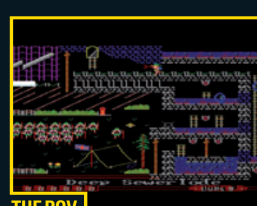
The Scout Steps Out isn't the worst game we've played but the fact that it very nearly could have been a decent game had certain elements been nipped and tucked is shameful. Stodgy controls and weird points mar a game that otherwise could have done for Scouts what *Paperboy* did for news bulletin delivery people. Well… almost.

» THE POINTLESS PARTS



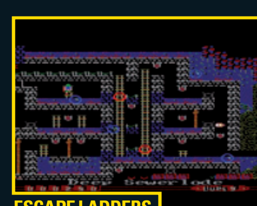
VISUALS

The game's visuals are colourful enough. It's just a shame that the gameplay does them a disservice.



THE POV

On occasion the viewpoint of the game shifts, making negotiating your way through the screens tricky.



ESCAPE LADDERS

The game gives the impression that you can use the environment to avoid the enemies, but that isn't the case at all.


It's a jungle out there.
Swing through it
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CLASSIC GAMING ON A BUDGET

CHEAP AS CHIPS



If there's one thing we've learnt about retro gaming, it's that your money can stretch an amazingly long way if you want it to. Granted, a mint copy of *Radiant Silvergun* is going to cost you a small fortune, but there are plenty of other worthy titles that can be picked up for less than a fiver…



» [SNES] The game's setting is a fabric world, with our hero Plok trying to recover stolen flags.



» [SNES] *Plok!*'s art style might look simplistic, but the game is wonderfully slick throughout.



» [SNES] According to the Pickfords' website, the game was conceived as far back as the late Eighties.



» [SNES] *Plok!*'s soundtrack was composed by the Follin brothers, and is excuse enough to snap up this game.



INFO

- **SYSTEM:** SNES
- **RELEASED:** 1993
- **PUBLISHER:** TRADEWEST
- **DEVELOPER:** SOFTWARE CREATIONS

PLOK!

As platform games became all the rage in the Nineties, many developers raced to jump on the bandwagon before seeing it break from the strain. Examples of this chipper videogame zeitgeist gave us *Bubsy The Bobcat*, *Rayman*, *Aero The Acrobat* and *Terry The Berry* – well, perhaps not the last one – which all tried to stand on the coat tails of *Mario* and *Sonic*, garnering differing levels of success and popularity as a result. Despite also coming out at this time, though, *Plok!* shouldn't be tarred with the same brush. A vibrant platform game from Ste and John Pickford, *Plok!* was conceived long before *Bubsy* was even a twinkle in Accolade's eye – as far back as the late Eighties, in fact – but was late to find release owing to the brothers having difficulty in getting the game made – that and the initial coin-op project for the character to appear in being sadly canned. Of course, when *Plok!* eventually found his way to our screens, those ideas and concepts that seemed fresh and innovative didn't quite seem fresh or innovative any more, and the game was lost in a wave of similar platform games.

Plok! is a great little platformer and remains one of the Pickfords' best games. A wonderfully simple concept, the game found players assuming the role of a little dude in an executioner's mask who could attack by throwing his limbs at his enemies, similar to Treasure's *Dynamite Headdy*, which actually came out after *Plok!*. But that wasn't all: on top of that, Plok also has a spinning jump attack that granted him extra height over his normal jump and, at certain points in the game, he was required to sacrifice his limbs by hanging them on coat hangers to actuate switches and platforms, allowing him to reach otherwise unreachable areas. Our hero could also pick up presents scattered around the levels that temporarily bestowed him with weapons and a neat thematic costume. In keeping with the threadbare nature of Plok himself, the game world was also suitably themed around fabric and textiles, with the levels christened with names such as Akrillic and Polyesta, and some platforms even fraying if Plok stood on them for too long.

Plok! is a well-crafted and wonderfully colourful game, with its basic character design belying slick presentation and a fabulous rock soundtrack. Composed by the Follin brothers, *Plok!*'s music also stands out as some of the best you'll hear pumping from a Super Nintendo, and complementing all of this excellent presentation and music is some wonderfully smooth gameplay and great level design to boot.

If you missed *Plok!* first time around then now's as good a time as any to track it down. The game can be picked up for practically the cost of a ball of wool these days – we're guessing there, as we have no clue whatsoever how much a ball of wool costs – so if you're a fan of the games of John and Ste, *Plok!* is a must-add to your Cheap as Chips list.



FROM THE ARCHIVES

RETRO GAMER DIGS UP THE FILES OF THE CLASSIC COMPANIES OF OLD

Tynesoft

Calling itself "the Geordie software house", Tynesoft worked with some big names in both the game and film industries. Andrew Fisher goes behind the scenes to talk superheroes, office pranks and sporting simulations

An industrial estate in the northeast of England may not sound like an obvious place for high-tech companies, but Tynesoft was the start of a cluster of software development that continues to this day. Directors Colin Courtney and Trevor Scott started the company in 1983, and at the time there was only one shop in Newcastle selling games, covering a 50-mile radius. Programmer Ian 'Sparky' Davison recalls: "I was one of the first two people employed by Tynesoft. It was around January 1984, although I did some freelance work before that for them."

Tied in with the genesis of Tynesoft was the birth of Adventuresoft UK. Started by Mike Woodroffe, the company added graphics to conversions of the Scott Adams text adventures for new formats. Tynesoft got the rights to publish *Savage Island*, and then a new game based on a television programme developed by the local ITV company, Tyne Tees. *Super Gran* had first appeared in a series of children's novels, where Super Gran ate porridge to gain strength and thwart the nefarious schemes of the evil Scunner Campbell – no relation to **RG**'s own Stuart Campbell. Tynesoft also developed an arcade game and offered the two titles together in a low-priced bundle.

Another early licence was *Auf Wiedersehen Pet*, based on the TV drama that followed British builders working in Germany, starring Jimmy Nail. His character, Oz the bricklayer, was the hero of the game, split into three arcade sequences. The first saw the player building a wall, the second drinking beer in the pub, and the third making his drunken way home. Meanwhile, programmer Alan Cox produced his adventure game *Blizzard Pass* for Tynesoft, designed for the Spectrum 128 and bundled with it at launch.

The big name on the box for Tynesoft's cricket game was Ian Botham. Kevin Blake says: "David Croft did the Electron version of *Ian Botham's Test Match*. Thousands of copies of the game went out with a bug, where it was actually impossible to hit the ball. Tynesoft got hundreds of calls and he took great delight in giving out my home number to irate customers."

Ian Davison reflects on the challenge of licensed games: "In the early days it was easier to have a lead to follow or copy for a conversion until we matured so we could produce some very good titles of our own. I enjoyed working with Subway Systems and some of the other third parties."

Tynesoft sought to cover as many formats as possible, bringing in programmers and freelancers to work on new machines. These included the MSX, Atari, C16 and Plus/4, and the BBC. Gary Partis says: "I offered them my game *Psycastria* for the BBC Micro in around 1986, but decided on having it published by Audiogenic instead. I then wrote the *Commando*-type game for them, called *Saigon*, for the BBC Micro in around 1987. I joined their full-time staff in July 1988."

Kevin Franklin "joined Tynesoft in April 1989 and was there until January

INSTANT EXPERT

Tynesoft is named after the River Tyne that flows through Newcastle

Tynesoft had close ties with American companies First Star and Mindscape for several years

The company was a developer and a publisher, with Adventuresoft UK being its first major signing

***Savage Island* was** the only Scott Adams adventure from Tynesoft

***Rollercoaster Rumbler*, developed** by Subway Software, could be considered the first 'on-rails' shooter

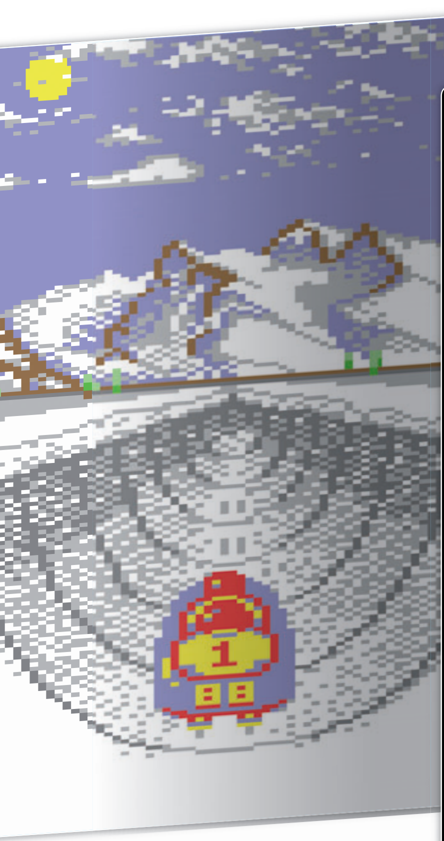
The *Olympiad* games were known as *Summer Challenge* and *Winter Challenge* in the USA, and were distributed by Mindscape

The original cover artwork for *Commonwealth Games 86* caused controversy, as many felt that the athlete was giving a Nazi-style salute

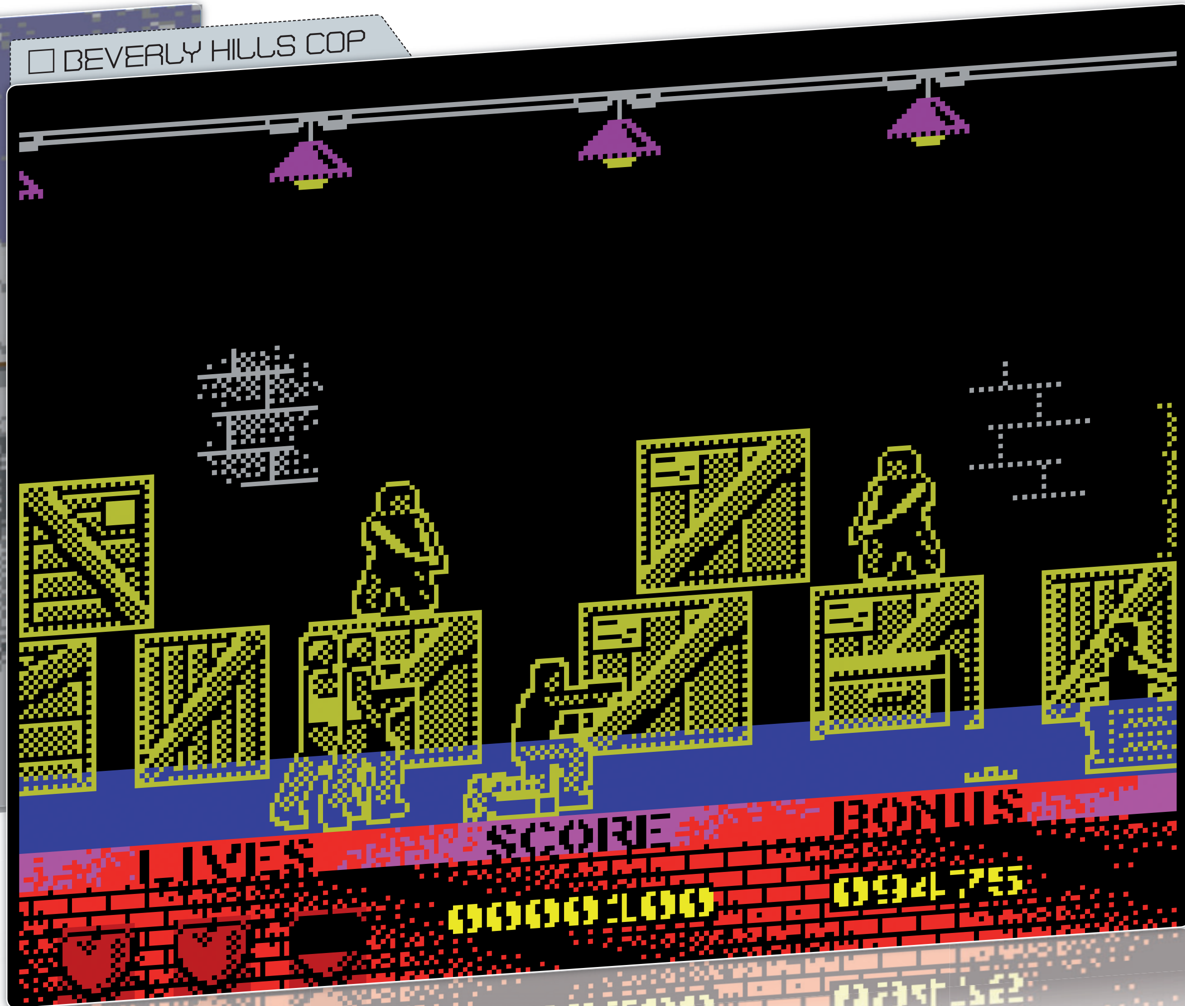
Tynesoft had several unreleased Atari projects when it closed, including *Plutos*, *Sirius*, *Tagalon* and *The Last Guardian*

Zortek And The Microchips was a series of BASIC games designed to teach programming, converted to the C16 and Plus/4 by Tynesoft

There is a separate company called Tynesoft Business Services, which used to sell educational software and is now a direct mailing company. Some online sources confuse the two companies



BEVERLY HILLS COP



> **"Although it had numerous failings as a place to work, the people were brilliant"**

KEVIN BLAKE, ON WORKING AT TYNESOFT



1990. I worked on two scrolling shoot-'em-up games for the Atari 7800 console. I don't recall the names of them, and although finished, they weren't released for some reason." *Plutos* and *Sirius* were those games, and working prototypes of both of them have been found and salvaged by collectors.

Some famous names made their way to the BBC thanks to Tynesoft. *Jet Set Willy 2* was produced by Chris Robson under licence from Software Projects but was substantially different to the other formats. Kevin Blake programmed *Spy vs Spy* in conjunction with First Star.

"It took me nearly four months," he said. "If I hadn't got some major help on the graphics from the likes of Gary Partis, then it would have taken a lot longer. Best thing was, I got to do a multi-page article on it for *Electron User* – fame at last! It involved a lot of hacking of other versions of the game from other platforms to get data and graphics out. I originally got supplied with the source of the Apple IIe version and basically binned it. I used some nice interrupt effects for splitting the screen into different coloured sections for mode 5, which had only been seen previously in the likes of *Elite*. The good thing about Tynesoft was that although it had numerous failings as a place to work, the people there were brilliant and willing to share techniques and code." Tynesoft was also responsible for the BBC conversion of *Boulderdash*, arriving after Superior's *Repton*.

Tynesoft's style of multi-part games expanded into sports simulations. *Summer Olympiad* and *Winter Olympiad* were similar to the Epyx Games, while there was also the less well-known *European Games* (*Commonwealth Games 86* on the BBC/Electron). *Circus Games* went up against the rival *Circus Attractions* from Rainbow Arts, and *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Rodeo* had six disciplines.

David Mowbray is full of praise for them: "They were really the first games I worked on professionally, so to speak, so it was lovely to be doing something big. Up until that point I had mostly been doing demos or small personal games; this was the first real commercial experience that I had. Colin always wanted the best graphics possible, so the games looked great for the time. And Tynesoft never really did 'me too' games – they always tried to bring something new to the table. This was a place full of very talented people who were very passionate about games. And this showed in the quality of their work."

Kevin Blake has a slightly different view: "The likes of the sports sims, though fun to do, were never as enjoyable to play in my opinion, apart from the Mindscape *Indoor Sports* stuff, which was a hoot. Nearly all the sports stuff for the BBC/Electron that I did was with David Croft, and we had a lot of fun doing them. Back then we actually ▶

BY THE NUMBERS

4 events in *Circus Games*, all beginning in T: tiger training, tightrope, trapeze and trick riding

5 events in *European Games*: hammer throw, long jump, swimming, rowing and weightlifting

5 events in *Winter Olympiad*: ski jump, slalom, downhill, biathlon and bobsleigh

8 levels in both *Super Gran* and *Superman: Man Of Steel*

10 was *Official Atari Magazine*'s review score for *Phantom*

17 was Brian Jobling's age when he joined Tynesoft

34 was the number of Tynesoft releases for the BBC and Acorn Electron

48% is what *Sinclair User* awarded *Beverly Hills Cop* in its review

50 was the number of pints of beer that a *Crash* reviewer collected in the second level of *Auf Wiedersehen Pet* to crash the game

60 was the number of rooms missing from the BBC version of *Jet Set Willy 2*


[Atari] Alligata gave Tynesoft the rights to convert *Who Dares Wins II* to the Atari.



TIMELINE

1983 COLIN COURTNEY AND TREVOR SCOTT FORM TYNESOFT, IAN DAVISON BEING AMONG THE FIRST FULL-TIME STAFF TO BE HIRED

1985 SUPERFILE, THE SPECTRUM DATABASE SYSTEM, IS RELEASED AS PART OF A COMPILATION WITH *IAN BOTHAM'S TEST MATCH CRICKET*

1987 MICRO VALUE BUDGET LABEL FORMED, SPECIALISING IN COMPILATIONS

WHERE ARE THEY NOW?



Brian Jobling
Brian set up Zeppelin and is now MD of Eutechnyx, specialising in racing games. Among his colleagues is Kevin Franklin.

Alan Cox
Alan's most famous work has been on the networking kernel for the Linux operating system. He was employed by Linux distributor Red Hat for nearly ten years, but left in 2009 to join Intel.

Bruce Nesbit
Bruce worked for The Bitmap Brothers, and is now back in Newcastle at Mere Mortals.



Steve Tall
Steve joined Bruce at The Bitmap Brothers and then moved on to Westwood, working as the lead on *Command & Conquer: Red Alert*. He was one of the group of employees that went on to form Petroglyph Games.

Phil Scott
Phil now spends his time as a "technology evangelist", helping to promote Nvidia products.

Gary Partis
Gary wrote *Hostages* and *Ego: Repton* for the Archimedes, and from 1991 has been designing embedded systems and computer peripherals.

Julian Jameson
Jools moved on to Sensible Software, programming the classics *Mega Lo Mania* and *Cannon Fodder*.

Kevin Blake
Kevin went on to Audiogenic and then Flair, before programming Game Boy titles for THQ, including *MTV Skateboarding Featuring Andy Macdonald*. After a few years as a website/software tester, he is now looking to get back into programming.

Ian Davison
Ian now works in software procurement for embedded software devices such as mobile phones, often working with games companies.



David Mowbray
David has worked for several different companies and is now technical director at Asylum Entertainment. Among his previous projects was work on the *Mega Man Anniversary Collection* for Capcom.

in the main did the graphics ourselves, so when you see the guy running down the lane to bowl at the pins in *Indoor Sports*, Dave drew him… and it's as funny/rubbish now as it was then. The game was good, though! I found that the stuff that got done in the later years just wasn't as good as some of the early stuff and was really just rehashing old ground, although it did pay a lot better than some of the other stuff."

Phil Scott admits: "We had designers who essentially delivered us unusable designs, so we just kept the front page and the name and then did our own thing. *Circus Games* and *Rodeo Games* were a bit more 'make it up as you go along'. My personal favourite of the ones I worked on was *Summer Olympiad*, I think. It just looked and played well on all the platforms."

To Gary Partis, there was another aspect to the games: "They made the programmers and artists money. I recall Dave Mann made a fair amount from his ST/Amiga *Olympiad* titles. I think he bought his house with the royalties."

Brian Jobling adds: "I worked on *Winter Olympiad* as an Atari 800 XL programmer. Most people with Atari computers could afford the disk drive. However, for the unlucky few that didn't and used a tape drive, you were looking at 20-minute load times between each event. I couldn't see that passing Sony and Microsoft standards these days."

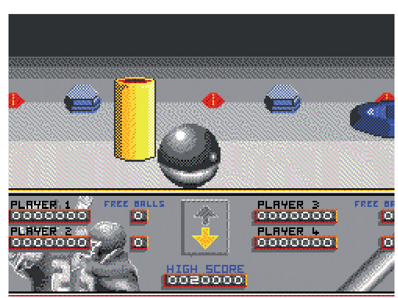
Changes were afoot by the end of the Eighties. First, Tynesoft started the Micro Value label. Existing titles and new games were published on its compilations and budget range. That was followed by the arrival of Zeppelin Games. Brian Jobling says: "I left Tynesoft to form Zeppelin Games with my Virgin Mastertronic colleague Derek Brewster and *Crash* magazine journalist Martin O'Donnell." As Tynesoft continued, so did Adventuresoft, signing a distribution deal with US Gold.

With the advent of the 16-bit machines, Adventuresoft turned its attentions to the horror genre and became Horrorsoft. Its first major title was *Personal Nightmare*, published by Tynesoft for the Amiga, ST and PC. Its unique selling point was that major events in the game happened on a strict timeline, and depending on where the player was they saw things differently. For example, an early event in the game is a road accident. If the player is on the street, they see it all unfold in front of them. If they are in the pub at the time, they will hear the sound of the brakes and the approaching sirens. Alan Cox helped program the complicated game engine.

The '*Superman* curse' struck Tynesoft and First Star as they collaborated on *Superman: Man Of Steel* (not to be confused with First Star's earlier *Superman* game from 1985, nor the 2002 Xbox game with a similar title). David Mowbray admits: "In those days the amount of attention you got from the licence holders was almost nothing compared to now. As long as we were not doing anything silly with their licence, then there were not really any problems."

Phil Scott cuts to the chase: "*Superman* was really restrictive. Let's face it: kryptonite being his only weakness limits gameplay, plot and weapons somewhat."

Kevin Blake's view is similar: "Game design on the original licensed stuff also took longer, as a lot of it ended up designed by committee, and as, in the main, I was on the periphery of Tynesoft, sort of looking in, I never really got involved in that. I always thought that the stuff I designed





1988 — BRIAN JOBLING LEAVES TO FORM ZEPPELIN GAMES

1989 — *SUPERMAN: MAN OF STEEL* RELEASED WITH FIRST STAR TO POOR REVIEWS

1990 — BANKRUPTCY AND THE FIRE BRING TYNESOFT TO AN END IN AUGUST 1990. MANY OF THE STAFF MOVED ON TO COURTNEY'S NEW COMPANY FLAIR. *BEVERLY HILLS COP* BECOMES THE LAST OFFICIAL RELEASE FROM TYNESOFT



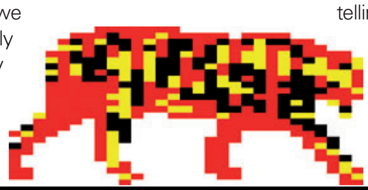
Tynesoft staff in 1987 – Mike Landruff, Ian Davison, 'Baldrick', Gary Grey, Bruce Nesbit, Paul Drummond, Phil Scott, Gary Partis, Dave Croft, Mike Hedley, Steve Tall, Dave Mann.

myself or converted for an existing format was the best work I did. When we did the *Superman* licence, which incidentally I thought was pretty horrible from the start, it was clear that a pattern was emerging for basically transferring the multi-part sports sim idea to arcade games. We were still spending the same amount of time producing them, but more people were working on individual parts, and generally for the BBC stuff I was pulling them together, which, to tell you the truth, wasn't much fun."

Best behaviour

Office pranks and strange goings-on earned Tynesoft a reputation and the nickname 'Tynesoft Boys Club'. Phil Scott jokingly says, "Rule 1: Nobody talks about what happened at Tynesoft Boys Club," but then is happy to spill the beans: "Fireworks in the car park, the trip to Florida, food poisoning from the drinks machine…"

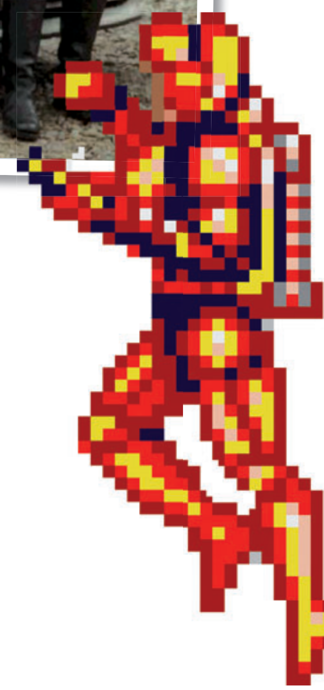
Kevin Blake elaborates: "I've often said I could have written a book on the mad stuff that went on there. There's no way in the world I could divulge half the stuff because, quite frankly, it's disturbing. We were promised a free holiday to Florida as a reward at Christmas in 1988, and as time went by we all realised we were nowhere near realistically finishing it after working really hard, so we basically faked how close to the finish we were and went anyway." One prank involved removing all the nuts and bolts from Gary Partis's chair, knowing his habit of jumping into it in the morning. Another occasion saw artist Gary Grey taped to his chair while on the phone to his girlfriend, and the chairs and fire extinguishers featured in fighting and racing along a long corridor in the office.

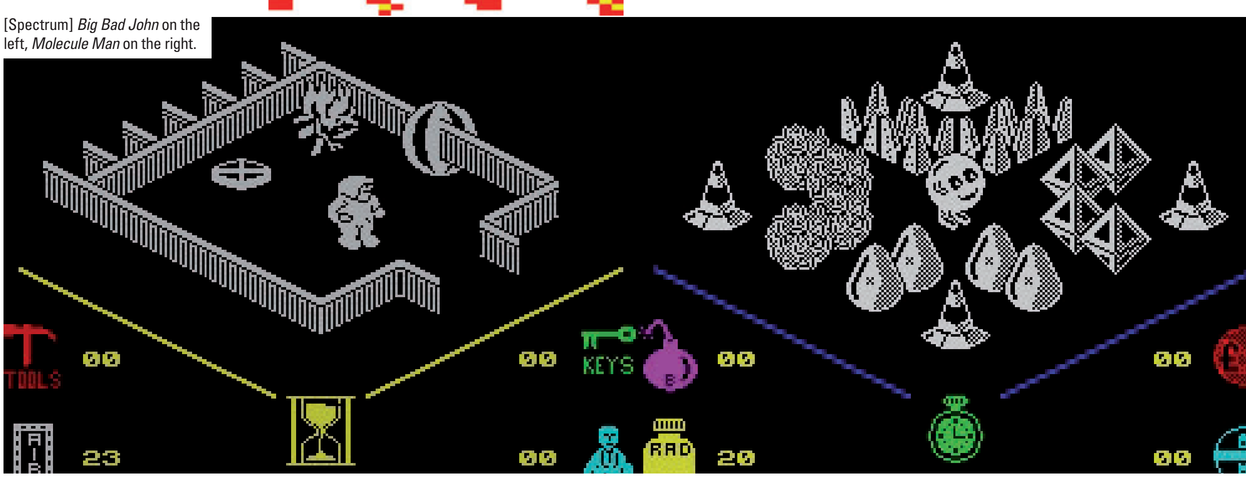


David Mowbray puts forward another moment: "One story that springs to mind would be the time we showed *Circus Games* at the *PCW* Show in London. No one noticed that a piece of placeholder art in the build had bare breasts on display, so it ran for three days with a lady flashing her breasts on the trapeze. I will refrain from telling you anything about the people; we were all very silly and quite young."

Kevin Blake adds a mean trick played on a colleague: "Dave Croft did a maze game called *Phantom*, and while he and the management were out for dinner the new accountant arrived. We convinced him to make a call when they came back claiming to be the lawyer for US Gold, saying they were filing suit against Tynesoft for copyright infringement against their *Gauntlet* conversion. We let them run around like headless chickens for a good while before breaking the news to them."

Phil Scott remembers: "The misprints on nearly every box. The fact that Trevor – one of the bosses – was the printer was even more hilarious… "A free T-shift with every game…", "Ten-pen bowling…" Too many to mention." The actual working conditions were challenging, too: "My computer had icicles on it, as there was no heating in our room, and Trevor came in demanding we work. The hard drive took a





[Spectrum] *Big Bad John* on the left, *Molecule Man* on the right.

THE PRICE OF HONESTY

Tynesoft was drawn into the controversy surrounding Harry S Price and his Spectrum games. The most famous was *Crime Busters*, threatened with legal action by Mastertronic after it was revealed to contain code from David Jones' *Spellbound*. Among the titles that Tynesoft unknowingly published were *Big Bad John* (seemingly based on *Molecule Man*), *Bubble Run* (originally released as *Bubble Trouble*, a type-in listing by *Your Sinclair*), and *Who Said That?* (MC Lothlorien's *Micro Mouse Goes Debugging*). However, Price has never admitted that any other titles were illegally created.

FROM THE ARCHIVES



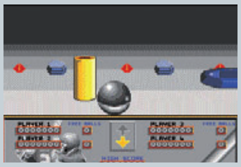
[C64] Axel Foley as he appeared on the title screen.

SIX OF THE BEST



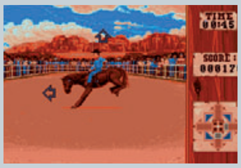
Phantom [1987]

David Croft took elements of *Ghostbusters* and *Gauntlet* and combined them to good effect in this multiformat release. The intro sequence shows the player arriving at a house and stepping inside to clear out the ghosts that are haunting it.



First Person Pinball [1989]

In a crowded market, *First Person Pinball*'s gimmick was its different view on the action. As well as a familiar overhead view, a smaller window gave a 3D perspective just behind the ball as it bounced around the table.



Rodeo Games [1989]

Also known as *Buffalo Bill's Wild West Rodeo*, there were six events. Target practice, knife throwing, bronco riding, stagecoach rescue, calf roping and steer wrestling all evoked the spirit of the Wild West and garnered good marks.



Personal Nightmare [1989]

Horrorsoft's ambitious project sees the Devil trying to take over a peaceful English village. Called to investigate by your father, the local vicar, there are several grisly ways to die and a clever interface that mixes text and icons.



Summer Olympiad [1988]

Bold graphics and unusual controls typify Tynesoft's approach to the Olympics, released just in time for the Seoul games of 1988. Fencing, hurdling, skeet shooting, platform diving and triple jump make up the five events.



Mirax Force [1987]

Chris Murray's *Mirax Force* makes good use of the Atari hardware. Drawing inspiration from *Uridium*, the player has to destroy surface features on the enemy motherships while under attack from waves of smaller enemies.

THREE TO AVOID



Super Gran [1985]

The adventure game was not well-received, but the arcade game was universally panned. *Crash* magazine felt that it was a waste of money, and bemoaned the absence of Billy Connolly's theme tune on side B of the tape.



Superman: Man Of Steel [1989]

Eight sections portrayed the action, from the *Space Harrier*-style 3D of the first level to a vertically scrolling asteroid field. The poor graphics, sound and execution made this one to avoid, joining a long list of poor *Superman* games.



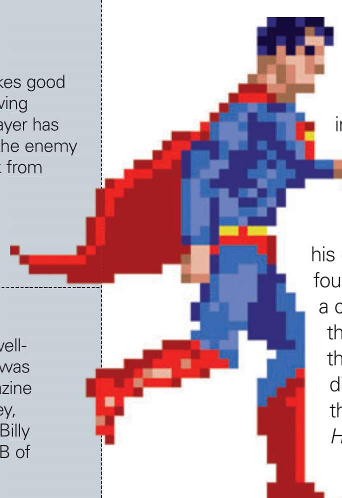
The Steelyard Blues [1987]

Another of Harry Price's games of questionable origin. Research by the comp.sys.sinclair newsgroup has uncovered the game that it was almost certainly based on: *Cheekah's Exploits*, a platformer with a level editor, published in a 1986 issue of *Your Computer*.

morning to fire up. The birds were flying in through a hole in the wall."

Kevin Blake recalls other embarrassing problems: "Burglars broke in and stole thousands of boxes of *Zortek And The Microchips* for the Plus/4. The management celebrated, as it was stock they could never sell and was insured. Unfortunately, they were found abandoned and returned. We fashioned the hundreds of boxes into armchairs and settees and lounged around on them. Every Christmas party ended up in a farce or someone getting sacked. We got banned from all the local pubs because of the damage or the quite frankly disgusting behaviour that went on."

Ian Davison acknowledges that many of his stories would be unfit for print, but does share one: "We bought a self-locking fireproof wall safe for disk storage. This was walled in, and we waited until it had set before asking the guy who brought it in where the keys were. He put them in the safe so they didn't get lost…"



Bruce Nesbit has his own stories to tell: "We found a huge spider behind a cupboard. Knowing one of the other programmers hated them, we put it in a floppy disk box and put a label on the front saying '*Hector's House*'. When the guy realised what was in it, he threw it across the room, then threw his chair after it."

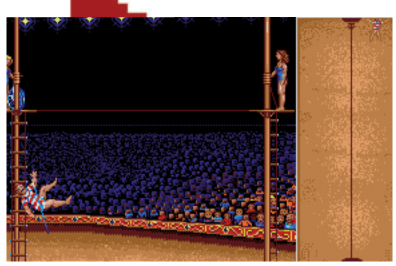
Brian Jobling has another Trevor Scott story: "Tynesoft was in the early days of merchandising and marketing. They did very well, and Trevor bought himself a new Porsche. It was his pride and joy, and decided he would get the warehouse staff to wash it. It was washed with washing-up liquid, which removed all the polish and shine from the car."

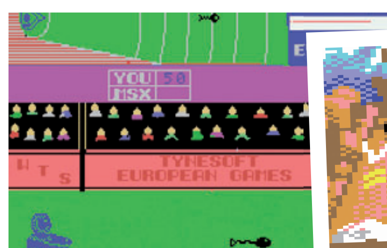
Game over

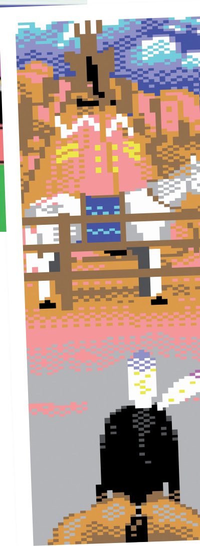
The end of Tynesoft was traumatic, the company going into administration and the office being hit by a fire. "The receivers came in and locked the doors. It closed on the Friday, and we all had to go down on the following Tuesday to see the receiver, and we turned up and the place was charred. Luckily it was so damp in there that the fire didn't take full hold, and so it was mostly smoke damage," says Phil Scott.

Kevin Blake had a look: "After the fire I went into the warehouse. There were hundreds of metal sliders on the floor. 3.5" floppies had melted in the heat and shrank, the metal bits flying off and littering the floor. It was heartbreaking and such a waste of talent. Tynesoft went bust because, as a company, it was tied to a print works that went belly-up. They had a turnover at the time of around a million quid a year, and invested heavily in the printing side. That went belly up, taking Tynesoft with them."

One major project affected by the administration was the *Beverly Hills Cop* tie-in, as Kevin Blake explains: "The final

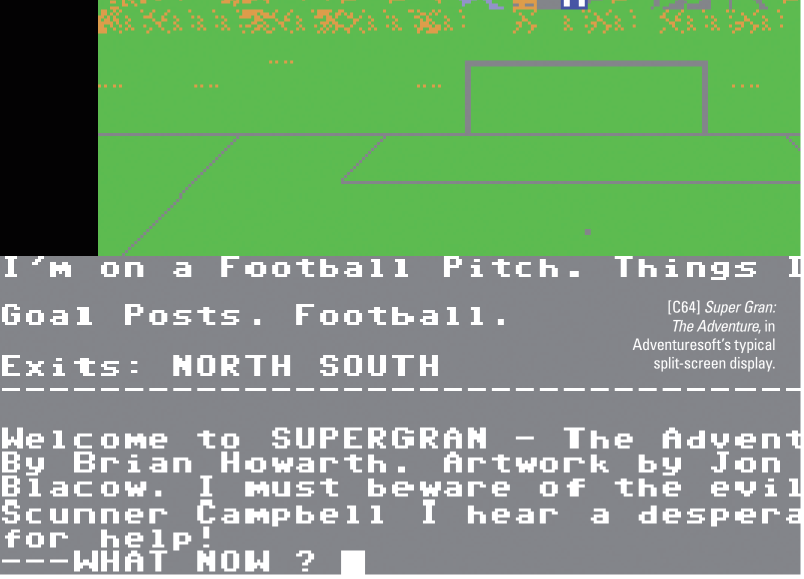






"The people were the real treasure at Tynesoft"

DAVID MOWBRAY PRAISES HIS FORMER COLLEAGUES



[C64] *Super Gran: The Adventure*, in Adventuresoft's typical split-screen display.



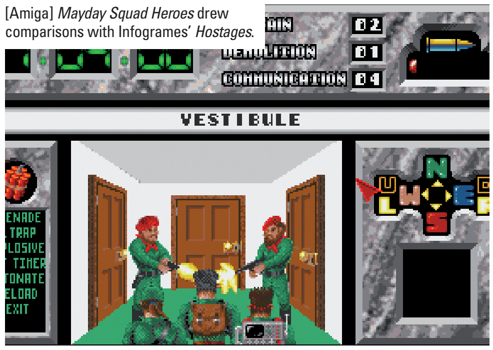
Brian Jobling in 1987, before he decided to leave Tynesoft.



Gary Partis 'sits' at his desk after the fire.



[BBC] The loading screen from Tynesoft's BBC conversion of *Spy vs Spy*.



[Amiga] *Mayday Squad Heroes* drew comparisons with Infogrames' *Hostages*.

game was *Beverly Hills Cop*, which quite frankly was awful, but only completed after the receiver offered me £5,000 to complete it. I subcontracted some to Steven Robson and pulled its rag-tag parts together. I was ashamed of the final game, to be honest, and I was pleased to see the back of it by the time it went out."

Phil Scott adds: "Design-wise, the film stuff was a challenge, because of having to stick within the remit of the licence. The sport games less so, but you're then bound by the rules of the sports. *Beverly Hills Cop* could have been great with more time. There's a hint of *Cannon Fodder* in there on the 16-bit versions," he says, referring to the vertically scrolling mansion sequence, created by Julian 'Jools' Jameson.

Gary Partis says: "Programming-wise, there were no problems. Unfortunately the graphic artists had to ensure that any images, such as Axel Foley in *Beverly Hills Cop*, looked realistic."

Press reaction was muted, drawing unfair comparisons with Ocean's film licences that adopted a similar structure.

The directors started up new companies in the same area, with Colin Courtney starting Flair and retaining the Micro Value budget label. Among Flair's output was *Elvira: Mistress Of The Dark* from Horrorsoft, originally to be published by Tynesoft. "A group of us went to work at Flair," says Phil Scott. "Some went to work for Trevor, and we all kept crossing paths, but the team never got fully together again, which was sad."

Kevin Franklin says: "I remember being a bit disappointed, as it meant I wasn't going to get paid for the freelance work I had been doing for them! In the years that followed, I worked with a few of my old Tynesoft colleagues at various companies and these days I am in contact with some of those now and again. There were quite a few interesting 'characters' at Tynesoft and at times it was a lot of fun working there. Things have moved on an awful lot in the games industry since those days. It certainly wasn't as professional back then!"

David Mowbray says: "The people were the real treasure at Tynesoft. The games business is quite small and I still know some of the people I used to work with back then, so it was not terrible – places come and go, the people mostly remain. I recall leaving Tynesoft on the Friday and being in Zeppelin on Monday."

Ian Davison says: "I was instrumental in bringing the staff back together [at Flair]. At the time I was sad to see Tynesoft close its doors. However, I don't always look back on those times with as fond memories as I used to. The team was great fun and it was good for a while, but it was a lot of work for not a lot of reward in the end."

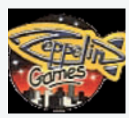
Brian Jobling has a different perspective on the closure: "Six months earlier, Tynesoft had offered to buy Zeppelin Games, so I was a little relieved that we didn't close the deal. However, there was a lot of good lads at Tynesoft, and I remember being sad for them and their families. I still get the odd Tynesoft employee's CV pass my desk."

While Tynesoft was never at the very top of the software house league, it does leave behind it a legacy of development in the Newcastle area. As Carri Cunliffe, director of the GameHorizon conference, said in 2009, "[Tynesoft] became a training ground for creating talent in the region, with people leaving to set up their own businesses. I think that's the reason why there's a strong cluster, and I think the reason it's remained a strong cluster is because they do actually work together."

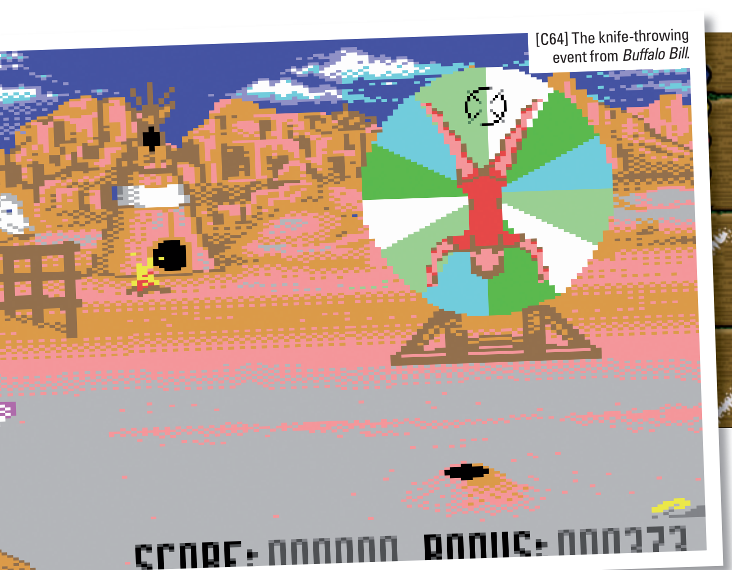
That cluster included Reflections (formed in 1984 and now part of Ubisoft) and Midway Studios in Gateshead (now defunct, with staff moving on to Atomhawk), as well as Virtual Playground (Colin Courtney's new company), Eutechnyx and Mere Mortals.



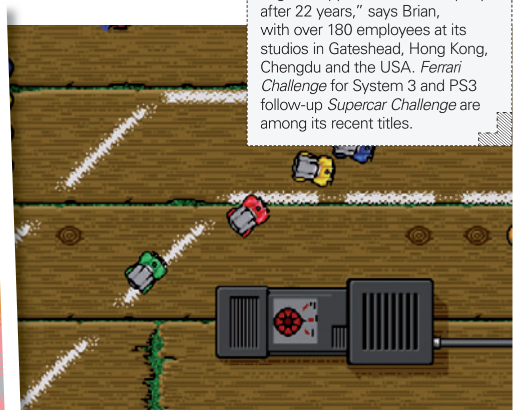
PLAY BALL



Brian Jobling was just 19 when he left Tynesoft and helped start the new software house Zeppelin, also based in the northeast of England. Zeppelin quickly established itself in the budget market with titles including shoot-'em-up *Zybex* and the graphically impressive platform game *Draconus*. The company moved into full-price games with the BBC-licensed *Match Of The Day* (a football management game) and *Edd The Duck* (inspired by *Rainbow Islands* and the children's TV character) on its Impulze label. The company even worked alongside its rival Codemasters to help develop the first two *Micro Machines* titles and *Pete Sampras Tennis* for consoles. After becoming Merit Studios Europe in 1994, the company switched names to Eutechnyx in 1996 with financial help from Infogrames, and obtained a developer/publisher licence for the Sony PlayStation. In 2000 it gained its independence and continued to develop racing games. "Eutechnyx is still the original Zeppelin Games company after 22 years," says Brian, with over 180 employees at its studios in Gateshead, Hong Kong, Chengdu and the USA. *Ferrari Challenge* for System 3 and PS3 follow-up *Supercar Challenge* are among its recent titles.



[C64] The knife-throwing event from *Buffalo Bill*.



With thanks to Dave Moore of Stairway to Hell for his help, to all the former Tynesoft staff for their input, and to Kevin Blake and Gary Partis.


BARKLEY
TURBO
INSERT
COINS
RECYCLE



Romero Remembers

One of my programming heroes, Mark Turmell, is the guy who created the original arcade version of *NBA Jam*. A great sports title that's still really fun to play.

RETROREVIVAL

NBA Jam

HE'S ON FIRE!!!

» ARCADE
» MIDWAY GAMES
» 1993

With news that Electronic Arts is reviving Midway's *NBA Jam* franchise, we recently returned to the original arcade game, and do you know what? It's still amazing fun to play.

Everything about *NBA Jam* just screams quality. The visuals still look wonderful, with instantly recognisable characters, sensational use of scaling, and bold, colourful visuals that capture the glitz and glamour of the actual sport. Then there is the superb animation that accompanies every single over-the-top special move that your players are able to effortlessly pull off. Add in faultless presentation; the cocky, in your face commentators; and beautifully crafted audio that really pulls you into the on-screen action and it's no surprise to learn that *NBA Jam* became a huge hit for Midway that spawned countless console conversions.

Ultimately, however, *NBA Jam* excels as a videogame because it was able to effortlessly transform an already fast-paced sports game into a gripping arcade hit. While the decision to only ever let you fully control one player seems a little backward – you still control the CPU's passing and shooting, so don't worry – using two-player teams ensures that there is constant interaction between the pair, allowing you to really feel a part of the proceedings. Admittedly it wasn't the most accurate representation of the sport – although it was the first to be officially endorsed by the NBA – but who cares when watching your favourite stars pull off death-defying dunks was so much fun?

Score three consecutive baskets with a player and the commentator would excitedly shout out, "He's on fire!", immediately granting your player unlimited use of turbo and greatly enhanced shooting, at least until the other team scored. Yes, it's not particularly realistic, but neither is watching your favourite player leap 20 feet into the air, gracefully pirouette, then deliver another impressive dunk.

Midway was going for fun and excitement, not realism, when it created *NBA Jam*, and it's testament to the development team's ability that it still holds up 17 years after its original release. Here's hoping that the new game is just as good. *

THE MAKING OF...

ROAD BLASTERS

An Atari game that made Mad Max look like a Sunday morning drive, RoadBlasters skilfully merged racing and shooting action. Ex-Atari development team Mark Stephen Pierce, Bonnie Smithson and Robert Weatherby line up on the starting grid. Your commentator for this deadly race: Craig Grannell







IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** ATARI GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- » **PLATFORM:** ARCADE (LATER CONVERTED TO AMIGA, AMSTRAD CPC, ATARI ST, C64, LYNX, MEGA DRIVE, NES, PC, SPECTRUM)
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **GENRE:** RACING/SHOOTING
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £400 FOR A WORKING CAB; £1+ FOR HOME CONVERSIONS

"The game was originally called *FutureVette*, like a Corvette… but from the future," says Mark Pierce, who pauses before adding: "I thought it was a hideous name." Mark is one of three key team members we tracked down who worked on Atari's 1987 game, which deftly merged shooting and racing action, and which was eventually renamed *RoadBlasters*. He's trying to remember the game's origins, which escape programmers Bonnie Smithson – the first of the team on the project – and Robert Weatherby. Mark recalls that the game was Lyle Rains' 'baby', and the design document was, thankfully, better than the game's name: "It was one sheet of paper. '*FutureVette*' was at the top, and there was a paragraph of text that pretty much said: 'You can drive real fast and shoot!' The vision was a mash-up of *Pole Position* and *Spy Hunter*, which was popular then."

As noted, Bonnie was first on the project. A recent Atari hire and new to gaming, she recalls being given tasks to get the hang of how game software was structured. "For this one, I was asked to program a graphics board to change the line offsets on hblank to shape a roadway," she says. Armed with a *Pole Position* cabinet for reference and Atari's System 1 hardware, Bonnie got a basic racing road up and running fairly quickly. "*Pole Position* had hardware to make the road move, but my hblank experiment showed that it was possible to create the same effect with less custom hardware."

Mark recalls that this was essentially the game that existed when he joined the project: "Bonnie was rebuilding *Pole Position*'s technology, and she'd created a road and the horizon that moved left and right. I think there was also a car sitting pinned that would turn a bit – all very rudimentary."

But with Mark and Bonnie working together, along with occasional input from other Atari staff, things rapidly evolved. "After we had the first-person view of the car, we added traffic, collisions, shooting, adversaries, points and scoring, and started working up levels," says Bonnie. "There were continual rounds of refinement, and so a typical day would include me composing new functionality and incorporating gameplay feedback and graphical refinements, and I'd add nuances to simple implementations that were placeholders."

> **"The design document pretty much said: 'You can drive real fast and shoot!'"**

Production of the game was an iterative process, and Bonnie was keen to make things 'tuneable' in real-time. "I exposed nearly every value in the game to something I could tweak while others were playing, and so if they complained about something I could immediately change it to see if they thought the game improved. I love real-time programming, and so I liked the timing constraints of the hardware. It was a challenge to slice up the processing so it could be done in time to make the game feel good. I learned what trade-off a gameplay designer wanted access to very quickly and gave it to them."

After several months, the team had a solid game where you raced against a timer, frantically blasting everything in your path as you did so. During testing, Lyle Rains deemed that feedback wasn't strong enough and so Robert Weatherby, fresh from *Championship Sprint*, was asked to join the project, to inject fresh ideas and assist with programming.

On playing the game, Robert found it too easy to blow up other road



» [Lynx] Atari's Lynx conversion retained much of the coin-op's speed and is much more forgiving.



» [Spectrum] The Spectrum 128k conversion of *RoadBlasters* is one of the better efforts.



THE MAKING OF… ROAD BLASTERS

users: "You could lay on the trigger and everything would get destroyed – there weren't any real hazards – so we armoured some cars, which meant you had traffic to contend with."

Having designed *Super Sprint*'s car attribute power-ups, Robert wanted something similar for *RoadBlasters*, and so extra weapons were added to the mix. "One of these came from a development mode I'd created, where collisions were disabled, enabling us to drive through other cars," says Bonnie. "As Mark and I were playing, we decided to make this a weapon option, which became the electro shield."

"And I think I was the one to suggest replacing *Spy Hunter*'s van with a plane that swoops in with your weapon," adds Mark. "It looks terrible today, but back in the day it was 'Wow!'"

The biggest change that Robert instigated, though, was ditching a timer – having the globe 'hover', continuing along the track, but decelerating, giving you the opportunity to catch it. I thought this really made the game fun – you're racing at high speed, shoot a car ahead of you, and have to squeeze between cars to grab the fuel you need to survive."

Some would have seen Robert's abrupt input as an intrusion, but Mark welcomed it: "Robert's a real good guy. A lot of people call themselves games designers, but I don't buy into that – they edit levels. But Robert understands how a game's got to have a hook, how to tune something, how to make an experience successful for a broad base. He, Dave [Wiebenson], Bonnie and I worked together to improve the game's design and we were a great team."

More features were slowly added to the game. "I contributed the idea of dune buggies that sped ahead of you and slammed on the brakes, Robert added

"We became aware of OutRun during development and were salivating about its hardware"

something he'd also done in *Super Sprint*. But the team wasn't convinced. "I didn't want to race against a clock – I wanted something more dynamic that acted like a clock, so I threw out there the idea of adding fuel strategically, and you acquiring it in order to finish a stage," remembers Robert. "People were lukewarm to the idea, but I was stubborn, said to give me a couple of weeks to show everyone what I was talking about, and went ahead and programmed it anyway."

Robert's fuel feature changed the game, adding depth: "As you race, you know you don't have enough fuel to complete each course, and so the game becomes a challenge that forces you to navigate between traffic to acquire fuel globes." Some fuel was then hidden in enemy cars, a feature that required quickfire tweaking. "When I first programmed that, you'd shoot a car and the fuel globe would fly by so quickly that you'd have no way to grab it," recalls Robert. "So I had the idea of 'fish tailing' and other aspects of car handling, and Brad Fuller added fantastic sound work that added immeasurably to the game," says Bonnie. "I also worked hard on adversary intelligence – programming I'm still proud of. Others on the team described what they wanted and it was my job to translate subjective terms of game 'feel' into code."

Mark's keen to point out Dave Wiebenson's contribution during this period of development. Beforehand, Dave had largely been a technician – the guy who'd build prototypes, go on field tests, and ensure that cabinets would work properly. But with *RoadBlasters*, he became heavily involved in laying out tracks. "Much of the success of the game was down to how Dave edited the levels," claims Mark. "He'd sit and edit text files that were pages and pages long, and he'd compare the code with the on-screen experience. Everyone at Atari would be playing games in the lab, so Lyle would be there and I'd be









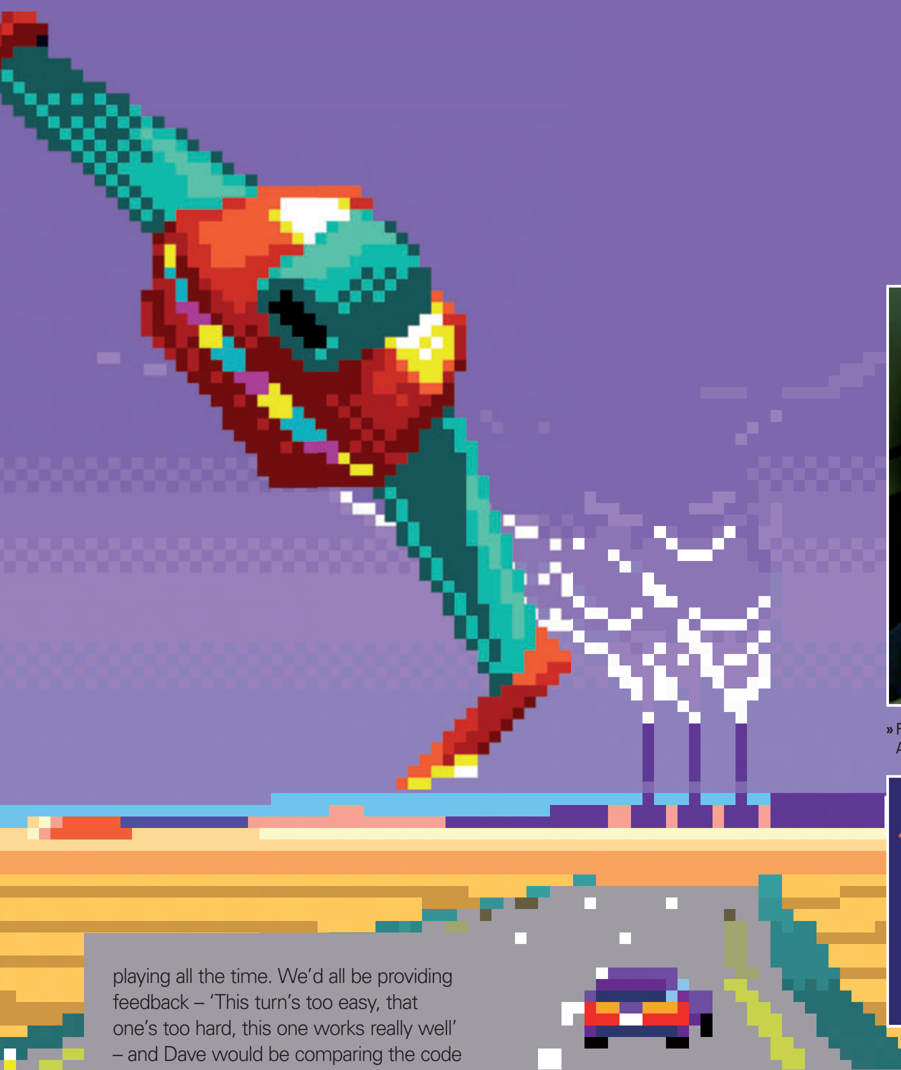


» [Arcade] One way to beat the morning rush hour: remove fellow road users by using tactical nuclear weaponry.



» Watch the entire cringeworthy *RoadBlasters* toy advert at **www.youtube.com/watch?v=4FabrJwPcDA** and understand why the line flopped.







» Robert Weatherby worked on many more coin-ops for Atari, including 1995's *Area 51*.





DEVELOPER HIGHLIGHTS

SUPER SPRINT (PICTURED)
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1986

KLAX
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1989

ROAD RIOT 4WD
SYSTEM: ARCADE
YEAR: 1991

playing all the time. We'd all be providing feedback – 'This turn's too easy, that one's too hard, this one works really well' – and Dave would be comparing the code to what was happening in the game."

Particularly instrumental in ensuring *RoadBlasters*' longevity, according to Mark, was the placement of fuel globes: "When the fuel globes came in, that kind of tied everything together, and Dave would watch how people played and then reposition the globes accordingly." Over time, testers would find they'd run out of fuel with a globe hovering tantalisingly just out of reach. "They'd then 'coin up' again, because they'd think, 'If I'd only done this one thing differently, I'd have made it'," says Mark. "Dave's work on this area of the game was simply genius. To my knowledge, *RoadBlasters* was the only game that he worked on the software for. I think Atari gave him a design credit, and up until that point artists were artists and technicians were technicians, and so the fact that bridge was crossed was also kind of unique."

RoadBlasters also stood out due to its exciting visuals, which were mostly designed by Mark. He utilised Atari's then-cutting-edge 3D system to kick-start object design, rather than



» [Arcade] *RoadBlasters* enables you to level-skip, rather than forcing you to play through the entire game.

hand-drawing everything. "The system was the one used for *I, Robot*, modified so I could model a car," he explains. "The process was tedious back then, but we built a program that would take my model, rotate it, take a snapshot and make a bitmap." The end result was noisy, messy and lacked textures, but Mark notes that when the images were retouched the end results were better than those in other games of the time.

However, the *RoadBlasters* project faced huge technological limitations, which enabled a rival to blaze past. Limited EPROM space meant horizon backgrounds had to work as stamps, forcing flipping and colour variations. "You couldn't just draw the pictures – you had to draw them and work out how to make them efficient," says Mark. But there was a bigger issue: Atari had no way to scale objects in 3D. "This meant we had to simulate scaling by drawing several versions of each graphic, and they'd 'pop' as they came towards you," says Robert, adding that the hardware also caused *RoadBlasters* to be a completely flat game, lacking hills and dips. This might have been fine if it wasn't for Sega's *OutRun*. "We became aware of that game halfway through *RoadBlasters*' development and we were salivating about Sega's hardware," laughs Mark. "If we'd had something similar, *RoadBlasters* would have had way more graphics, but we had to burn up so much ROM space with several versions of each car, bike, gun turret and roadside object." This also explains *RoadBlasters*' barren landscape, compared to Sega's classic racer – although one might easily argue that the Atari game's dystopian leanings suited such an artistic direction – as there simply wasn't room for more objects. "We were also limited from a performance standpoint, which is why there are always only a limited number of objects on the screen," says Mark. "We wanted to do tunnels and bigger explosions that scaled as they came towards you, but there was just no way. Sega could do that stuff because they just used one image for each object and scaled it."

But it wasn't all bad news for *RoadBlasters*. "I think it stood out – I've worked on lots of games, and *RoadBlasters* remains endearing to people," says Mark. He thinks this is down to the game's simplicity, tight level design, and the uniqueness of the mash-up. "It got to be that, during development, we'd play other racing games without shooting and it would feel like something was missing," he says. And although *RoadBlasters*' hardware paled beside Sega's, Mark notes that it was also far cheaper: "It had a very attractive price point for operators, and so the game was very successful – a surprise hit that came at a time when Atari needed it. Every now and again, you're fortunate enough to work on something that strikes a chord with pop culture, is accessible to play, and that does well for everyone – *RoadBlasters* was one of those games."



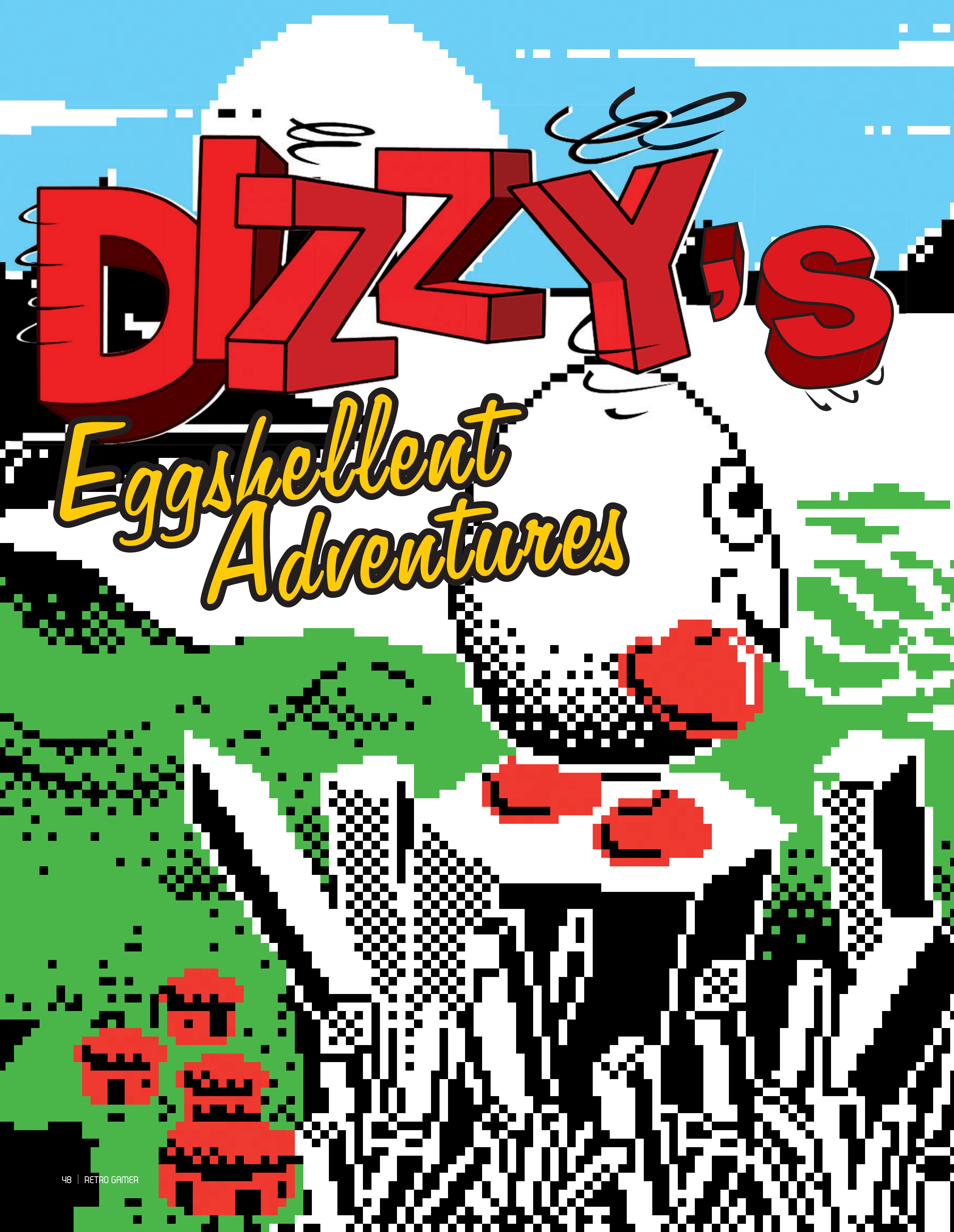
COMPETITION TIME

It's noted that the low price point for *RoadBlasters* made it a compelling purchase for operators at the time, but Mark Pierce reveals that a simple competition made them positively giddy with excitement for the game.

"We decided to implement a T-shirt contest," says Mark. "If you got to the game's last level, you got one chance at it. If you completed it, you got a huge bonus score and a screen came up that let you win a T-shirt – it gave you a secret code. If you sent the code in, we'd send you a *RoadBlasters* T-shirt."

Mark remembers that the promotion was hugely successful: "I can't tell you how many operators over the years have thanked me for putting that feature in *RoadBlasters*, due to the sheer number of people who'd come back to the game and play it just to try and win the T-shirt. I remember that we kept on giving out T-shirts long after the cut-off date we'd originally set!"

DIZZY'S Eggshellent Adventures





He's defeated an evil wizard, been marooned on a desert island, and even starred in his own Pac-Man clone, but just how much do you know about 8-bit hero Dizzy? Darran Jones speaks to co-creator Philip Oliver to find out

Considering that he's easily one of the most recognisable 8-bit characters to ever appear on a home computer, Dizzy's creation came about through necessity rather than deliberate design. While working on the follow-up to their smash hit *Super Robin Hood,* the Oliver twins, Philip and Andrew, began discussing how they could overcome the issues of drawing and animating human characters. Realising the limited number of pixels that they had access to, the pair hit upon the idea of creating a cartoon character for their next title.

"In *Ghost Hunters* we had this really nicely animated man, but his face was 3x3 pixels with only four colours – there's not really a lot you can do with that," recalls Philip Oliver, one half of the famous twins and co-founder of Blitz Games. "We quickly decided that our new fictional character needed as big a face as possible in order to show off happy, sad and scared expressions. Since the computers of the day were very slow, the whole character could only be 24 pixels by 32 pixels,

DIZZY'S Eggshellent Adventures

Creating Dizzy games





» "We looked at overall themes first and what classic stories we could possibly link in. Each then had to be broken into individual story threads and adapted to fit with the *Dizzy* world," says Philip.



» "Each thread had to be solved in a linear order, but individual ones could be played out independently. Each required certain key locations. For example, a billy goat would require a bridge guarded by a troll, Sleeping Beauty required a castle…"



» "We'd list all the locations, characters and puzzle items and then arrange them on a large grid – one square per screen – and the characters and objects were written onto small Post-It notes so we could easily move them around."

which quickly led us to a character that was practically all face, leaving just enough room for some gloves and boots to help him get around and interact with his fantasy world."

Dizzy was born, and the brothers ensured that he caught the gamer's attention by having the little tyke bob up and down whenever he moved or stood still. The fact that he looked rather cute as he trotted his way around the screen couldn't have hurt either. The brothers had a hero, but they still needed a game to put him in, so the ideas for Dizzy's first adventure began to percolate in the back of their minds while they worked on their next Codemasters game, *Grand Prix Simulator*.

After completing their enjoyable clone of the coin-op *Super Sprint*, the twins began work on *Dizzy*, then subtitled *The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure*. Desperate to incorporate their new development tool Panda Sprites into the game, they drew their new creation to see what he would look like spinning. Impressed with the results – "It turned him into such a unique character" – they renamed their creation Dizzy, although Philip has now revealed that a rolling character might not have been the best idea: "On reflection, I do wonder if his rotations were a good idea, since it occasionally led to frustrating gameplay as he'd roll off a platform and die."

Any gamer who has experienced the horrendous bridge that Dizzy has to constantly cross will agree with the above conclusion, but there's no denying that he was a refreshing new gaming character, and his modus operandi was one of the main reasons that he stood out from countless other games.

Although Dizzy himself was a brand new character, the fantasy-themed world he inhabited felt instantly familiar, giving the gamer the impression that while they'd never been there before, they had a good idea of what to expect. This had been an intentional ploy by the twins, who had already found similar success with the aforementioned *Super Robin Hood*.

"[When we created *Dizzy*] we wanted to create an adventure with fantastic places to explore, characters to meet and puzzles to solve," continues Philip. "We had just had huge commercial success with *Super Robin Hood* and therefore wanted to use the same platform format since we'd not only already programmed this but knew players liked this type of game."

Where *Robin Hood* took its ideas from the legends of Nottingham's most famous outlaw and was a setting that gamers were familiar with, the twins felt that creating a recognisable world from classic fairytales and fables would work in *Dizzy*'s favour.

"The puzzles were grounded in stories and scenarios that everyone would be familiar with," continues Philip. "We didn't want obscure puzzles based on physics or maths because it was important to us that younger players weren't disadvantaged. We wanted interesting, fun puzzles, so we took inspiration from classic fairytales and fables."

Dizzy's whimsical setting, clever puzzles and main character may have impressed critics when he made his 8-bit debut in 1986, but Philip recalls the Darling

An egg for all ages

The many adventures of Dizzy



Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1986

Dubbed '*The Ultimate Cartoon Adventure*', the original *Dizzy* laid some ambitious groundwork for future games to build upon. Puzzles were never too taxing, the game itself nipped along at a fair old pace, and Dizzy himself looked wonderfully endearing. Although some of the collision detection was rather ropey, causing many unnecessary deaths, the bouncy tune, simple yet effective level design, and tight controls still hold up today. Not *Dizzy*'s greatest adventure, but it was a cut above similar games of the time.



Treasure Island Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1987

Not content with delivering a wonderful toe-tapping tune, and improved visuals and gameplay mechanics, *Treasure Island Dizzy* also saw you having to collect 30 fiendishly hidden gold coins – this collecting element would later become a series staple. While the ability to carry around three items at any one time was a great addition to the game, even if it was a little clunky, whoever decided to give Dizzy just the one life gained the heartfelt enmity of fans everywhere.



Fast Food

» RELEASED: 1987

Dizzy may have been rather good at adventuring, but when he was moved to other genres he rarely had the same success. *Fast Food* was the first *Dizzy* spin-off to get released and was a dull take on *Pac-Man* that did little to improve on Namco's original classic coin-op. Many of its power-ups were pointless and added little value to the overall gameplay, while a complete lack of opponent AI meant that the game was extremely easy to beat and quickly became monotonous to play.



Fantasy World Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1988

This was where *Dizzy* came of age. The inclusion of his relatives added some much-needed depth and injected plenty of humour into a great game. Lots of text was used during the adventure, but rather than hinder progress it improved proceedings and added a storybook quality. Add a refined menu that allowed you to choose when and where you could drop objects along with a massive game world and it's little wonder that *Fantasy World Dizzy* is hailed as one of the greatest games in the series.



» [Master System] *Panic! Dizzy* on the Master System and Game Gear is completely different to Dizzy Panic, playing more like a reversed version of *Panel-De-Pon*. It's easily Dizzy's best puzzle game.

brothers – then the owners of Codemasters – being less than impressed when it was first demoed to them. "It was really funny," recalls Philip. "We showed [Dizzy] bouncing around [the castle] in *Ghost Hunters* and were trying to convince Richard and David that with the right puzzles and backgrounds it would really work. It was a hard vision to sell and I'm not sure they believed it would actually work, but it was no risk for them to let us carry on."

Despite the Darlings' trepidation towards the project, *Dizzy* soon began to win over everyone who played it, although it was something of a slow burner for the twins and Codemasters. "When *Dizzy* was released, nobody really knew about it and, to be honest, the box artwork was fairly poor," admits Philip. "It took time for word of mouth to spread and sales to pick up. Once people started to play it, though, they seemed to engage with it and we soon gathered quite a following."

If it took the public a while to warm to *Dizzy*, the twins found themselves in a similar situation when it came to a potential sequel. Indeed, when *Treasure Island Dizzy* was released in 1987 it leapt straight to the top of the software charts. It also proved suitably different to Dizzy's first outing, and while some of the more frustrating elements of *Dizzy* had been dispensed with – no falling bridges here – there were nevertheless plenty of subtle changes that made *Treasure Island Dizzy* easily the hardest game in the series. By far the biggest problem was the inclusion of a single life. *Dizzy* featured five lives and allowed you to find more as you progressed through the adventure; *Treasure Island Dizzy*, on the other hand, was incredibly ruthless and could make for a quite frustrating gaming experience. Another annoyance was the new inventory system that had been employed. While you could now handily hold up to three items at a time, you had no control over what you could drop and simply had to cycle through each one until you got to whatever you wanted to use.

Despite these gameplay changes, *Dizzy*'s sequel turned out to be a tremendous success for Codemasters and it wasn't long before the twins turned their attention to his next adventure, even if *Treasure Island Dizzy* had been something of a gamble. "Codemasters only ever paid royalties, so it was mostly our risk if we wanted to produce another, and it did take us about six months to build up the confidence to do it," continues Philip.

With *Dizzy* gaining more and more popularity, the Oliver twins began to experiment with him and released *Fast Food*, the first of several spin-offs starring the boxing-gloves-wearing hero. Far easier to create than the adventures – *Fast Food* was turned around in weeks as opposed to months – the spin-offs proved the perfect way of keeping fans craving new *Dizzy* games happy and also allowed the twins to take a break from his traditional adventures.

"We really liked writing the *Dizzy* adventure games, but when games were only taking a couple of months to write we didn't want to produce too many as they'd end up stealing sales from each other and become tiresome for us to keep writing," explains Philip. "On the other hand, we knew that *Dizzy* had a massive fan base and so we decided to create other types of games

"We wanted interesting puzzles so we took inspiration from fairytales"

PHILIP ON HOW THEY APPROACHED DIZZY'S NEW WORLD



Kwik Snax

» RELEASED: 1989

Unlike *Fast Food*, the Oliver twins got everything right with *Kwik Snax* and it remains the best puzzle-based *Dizzy* game. Trapped in a maze, Dizzy had to avoid enemies by pushing blocks around and collecting each level's quota of fruit. Collecting fruit in a specific order let you score more points, and enemies could be killed by crushing them against walls or between blocks. Tight controls, reasonable visuals and some jaunty tunes all proved that *Dizzy* did have a life outside adventuring.



Dizzy: Three And A Half

» RELEASED: 1989

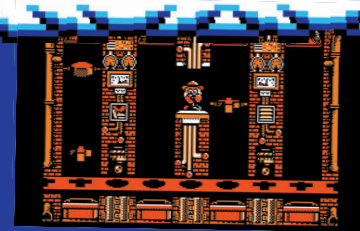
Dizzy: Three And A Half was a five-screen adventure that was given away free with the Christmas edition of *Crash* magazine and saw *Dizzy* having to rescue his cousin Danny before reaching the entrance to Magicland. It was a brief taster of the forthcoming fourth *Dizzy* adventure, hence the *Three And A Half* moniker, as well as the third *Crash* tape to feature the Oliver twins' creation. It also remains the only *Dizzy* game to feature Danny, Dizzy's nephew.



Magicland Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1990

Magicland Dizzy was the first *Dizzy* adventure that the Oliver twins contracted out to Big Red Software, and it proved a wise move. While *Magicland* was as surreal as any of Dizzy's other adventures, the constant references to classic tales and fables meant that it was far easier to relate to. Trying to wake a sleeping Dozy and sussing out how to retrieve Excalibur worked wonderfully and created some superb puzzles in the process. An excellent continuation of the series.



Dizzy Panic

» RELEASED: 1990

Sadly, *Dizzy Panic* is a rather dull take on *Tetris*. Random shapes continually fell from four pipes and Dizzy had to match them up with identical holes that appeared in a movable conveyer belt. If you tried to drop a shape through the wrong hole the pipes lowered until it was game over. *Dizzy Panic* may have boasted some nice presentation, but sluggish controls and unfair gameplay meant that this eggy outing proved more frustrating than challenging.

Dizzy's Eggshellent Adventures

to appeal to these fans and hope that they'd still sell really well if they starred Dizzy."

While many of the releases certainly proved popular, they weren't always up to the same high standards as the core franchise. *Fast Food* in particular was little more than a derivative, albeit perfectly playable, take on *Pac-Man*, requiring Dizzy to run around a variety of different mazes hunting down snacks and avoiding four monsters by the names Bonzo, Wizza, Pippa and Fido. While it featured cute visuals, amusing cut-scenes and a host of different levels, its slow pace and lack of originality didn't sit well with critics, and it failed to achieve the same high scores that the *Dizzy* adventure games managed.

Fantasy World Dizzy came next, and the Oliver twins really hit their stride, with many fans stating that it's the best instalment in the series. It once again granted you lives – three this time – and featured far more elaborate and clever puzzles while returning to the fairytale theme that had served the original *Dizzy* so well. Indeed, many of the puzzles were directly inspired by classic tales and fables, with the route to the mythical cloud castle being a particular favourite of Philip's.

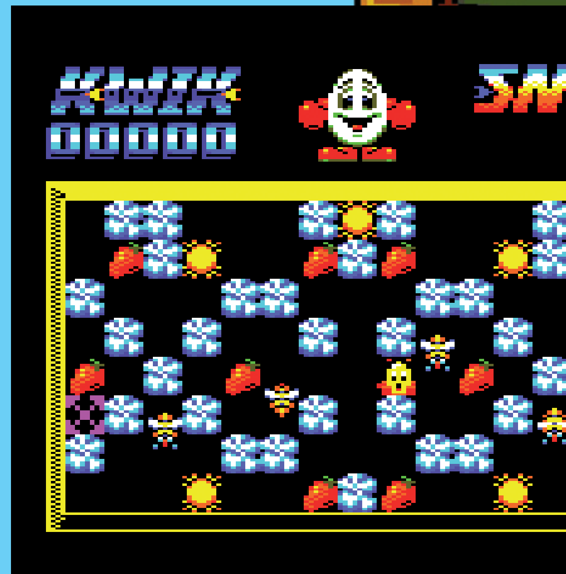
"In *Fantasy World Dizzy* players were presented with the challenge of reaching the cloud castle with only a cow. The idea was to take the cow to the shopkeeper and in return he'd give you a magic bean. Then you'd place the magic bean beneath the lowest cloud and water it. Obviously you'd need to find a bucket, attach it to the well and get some water before you did that, but once you'd figured this out you'd have grown your own beanstalk and could climb up into the clouds."

Clever puzzles, familiar locations, a larger playing area and a far better inventory system – you could only carry two items at a time, but could select which one you wanted to use – all combined to create another smash hit for the twins, which coincidentally also happens to be Philip's favourite game in the series.

"Everything just came together really well for *Fantasy World Dizzy*," he explains when we asked him about his favourite. "Although the first *Dizzy* featured lots of new ideas, it did have a few rough edges and very few characters to interact with. *Treasure Island Dizzy*, on the other hand, introduced more characters and story but was flawed by having only one life! With *Fantasy World Dizzy* we felt that we had improved in all areas. It featured a great story, new characters, inspired puzzles and good gameplay. We're both still really proud of that one."

In addition to being easily the best game in the series, *Fantasy World Dizzy* is also responsible for introducing the Yolkfolk, Dizzy's extended friends and family. Characters ranged from a laid-back hippy named Dylan to a love interest by the name of Daisy and were inspired by a variety of different TV show personalities. "The Yolkfolk were introduced to enable more story threads and interesting characters," begins Philip about their origins. "Dora, the brainy sister, was inspired by Velma in *Scooby-Doo*, while Daisy, the 'love interest', was a cross between Daphne in *Scooby-Doo* and Daisy Duke. Hippie pal Dylan was based upon Neil from *The Young Ones* and Dylan the Rabbit in *The Magic Roundabout*, while Grand Dizzy was our version of Granddad from *Only Fools And Horses*. Finally, Denzil was the 'cool dude' friend who was our take on the Fonz from *Happy Days*."

In the same year that *Fantasy World Dizzy* made its debut, the twins released another spin-off in the form of *Kwik Snax*. A follow-up to *Fast Food*, *Kwik Snax* once again featured a maze design, but this time it was a fair cleverer title, taking inspiration from block-







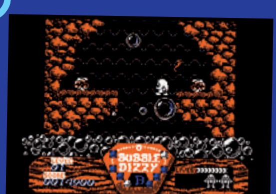
Cont...



Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk

» RELEASED: 1990

Prince Of The Yolkfolk originally appeared as part of the superb *Dizzy's Excellent Adventures* compilation, but proved so popular that it eventually received a separate release. Sadly, while the core gameplay is as good as ever, the tiny number of rooms in the game – just 30 – meant that it lacked any real substance. It worked beautifully as part of the compilation but wasn't on par with *Dizzy*'s usual standalone adventures.



Bubble Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1990

Having started development as a mini-game in *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy*, *Bubble Dizzy* was turned into a spin-off budget release that once again wasn't up to the same standard as the usual adventures. While the concept was sound enough – think *Rainbow Islands*, but you reach the top of the stage by using bubbles – it was let down by monotonous gameplay and clunky controls. Stick with the mini-game version, 'Bubble Trouble', which is far more polished.



Spellbound Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1990

At its time of release, *Spellbound Dizzy* was *Dizzy*'s biggest adventure, featuring over 100 screens of classic *Dizzy* action. Sadly, *Spellbound Dizzy*'s sheer size meant that there was a lot of needless backtracking, and it didn't really contain the same enjoyment of previous adventures – who could forget the endlessly boring trips to the Sandstone Quarry? It still sold extremely well, however, and Codemasters had yet another hit on its hands from this popular series.



The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1991

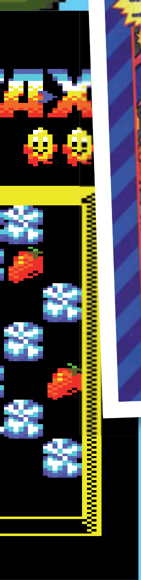
Delayed due to Game Genie disputes until 1991, this remains one of Dizzy's best outings and proved that the 8-bit legend could easily hold his own in the more cut-throat console market. While a little tough in places due to numerous enemies, the polished controls, great presentation and clever puzzles make *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* a great purchase for both existing fans and newcomers to the series.



Dizzy Down The Rapids

» RELEASED: 1991

What happens when you cross *Dizzy* with *Toobin'*? You get a poor game that not only cynically cashes in on *Dizzy*'s success but fails to do Atari's fun coin-op any justice. As with *Bubble Dizzy*, *Dizzy Down The Rapids* was another title that started off as a mini-game in *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy*. Although the concept is sound and proven, it was let down by dull visuals, fiddly controls and dull gameplay. One to definitely avoid.





» “Codemasters occasionally [used Dizzy] as a mascot but only when promoting family games. There was a push to age up the image of Codemasters generally and therefore Dizzy was seen to hold this back. Eventually Codemasters stopped publishing *Dizzy* games because they were seen to be too young for the new image that the Darlings wanted for the company.” Philip Oliver

pushing games like *Pengo* and *Sokoban*. Dizzy had a set amount of food to collect and would move around the maze, shunting blocks to destroy enemies. It's a highly enjoyable effort that was released on a variety of different systems. Interestingly, the Commodore 64 effort is quite a bit different from its peers and has more similarities with Sega's arcade coin-op *Flicky*, possibly because it was coded by Jason Benham and not the brothers. Dizzy must travel around mazes collecting little Fluffles and guide them to the exit. The more Fluffles you save at once, the bigger the bonus. While it's a far better effort than *Fast Food*, it's the Oliver twins' version of *Kwik Snax* that is definitely the one to go for.

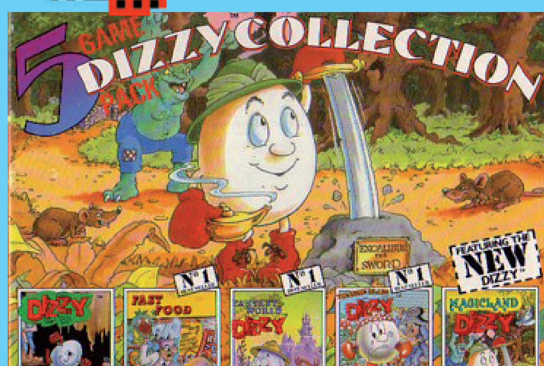
By 1990 the franchise juggernaut that was *Dizzy* really picked up steam, with no less than a staggering five games getting released throughout the year: *Magicland Dizzy* arrived in February, puzzle game *Dizzy Panic* hit two months later, while *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk* was released in August. Spin-off *Bubble Dizzy* arrived in November, while *Spellbound Dizzy* became one of Codemasters' big Christmas releases. By now it was becoming clear that *Dizzy* was a time-consuming project for just two people, and the brothers made the decision to take on extra help, making *Fantasy World Dizzy* the last game that they created themselves.

"Games were starting to take longer to write and with only so many hours in each day we had no alternative but to allow others to start producing new games, explains Philip about passing on the torch to Big Red Software. "Before that point we had already commissioned others to do conversions of our games to other formats, so it was the next logical step to allow someone else to create a whole game. Some we liked, particularly *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk*, but some we weren't so keen on. It was tough to give creative input from a distance and it was for this reason that we set up an office and started to employ people. We like to think that it was this experience that helped us to appreciate things from the perspective of our publishers in years to come. Our company, Blitz Games Studios, is about to celebrate its 20th anniversary, and all of the things we experienced in those early days continue to inform how we run things today."

Although *Dizzy* had proven to be a big success on home computers, the twins and Codemasters were well aware that there was another lucrative market that *Dizzy* could potentially move on to, and while the franchise had been selling hundreds of thousands of units in the UK, there were potentially millions to be made by moving into the extremely healthy console market. *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* (*Fantastic Dizzy* outside Europe and Australia) was converted to all the main home consoles of the time as well as the Atari ST, Amiga and PC.

Far too ambitious for the 8-bit home computers, *Dizzy*'s console outing was an impressive title that combined ideas from a variety of previous *Dizzy* titles.





» Codemasters released several Dizzy compilations for various 8 and 16-bit systems. *The Dizzy Collection* is easily the best due to it containing four adventures: *Dizzy, Treasure Island Dizzy, Fantasy World Dizzy* and *Magicland Dizzy*.



Crystal Kingdom Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1991

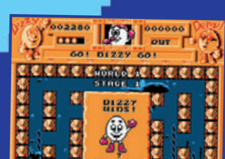
With previous 8-bit *Dizzy* games retailing for as little as £1.99, *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy*'s £10 price felt like an insult. While the game itself was highly polished – hardly surprising considering its nine-month development time – it still felt like a cynical move to part *Dizzy* fans from their cash. The free poster and stickers that were bundled with the game did little to convince that Dizzy's last adventure was worth the extra.



Dizzy The Adventurer

» RELEASED: 1992

Dizzy's second NES outing was actually an update of *Prince Of The Yolkfolk*, but offered greatly improved aesthetics and an overall slickness that was missing from the earlier game. Packaged in with the Aladdin Deck Enhancer, *Dizzy The Adventurer* once again proved that *Dizzy* could have enjoyed a successful life on consoles. If only Camerica hadn't gone bust. Who knows what could have happened…



Go! Dizzy Go!

» RELEASED: 1992

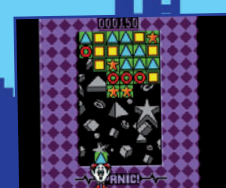
Go! Dizzy Go! is unusual as the only *Dizzy* title to only be available as part of a compilation. Originally intended as an Aladdin Deck Enhancer game, *Go! Dizzy Go!* eventually appeared on a Codemasters *Quattro* compilation. It was also ported to the Master System and Game Gear, although only the Game Gear version appears to have seen a release. It's worth tracking down as it combines elements of *Adventures Of Lolo* and *Kwik Snax*, and boasts great visuals and jaunty tunes.



Dreamworld Pogie

» RELEASED: N/A

Dreamworld Pogie was originally an Aladdin Deck Enhancer game for the NES but was later shifted to Game Gear development as part of a new *Dizzy* compilation. Sadly, *Dreamworld Pogie* was cancelled after several programming staff left and the twins were unable to spare anybody else to replace them. Although it managed to reach the alpha phase and playable form, the game was never released and was quickly dropped from the final compilation.



Panic! Dizzy

» RELEASED: 1993

Not to be confused with *Dizzy Panic*, which is a different game completely, *Panic! Dizzy* is a wonderful little puzzle game that found its way onto *The Excellent Dizzy Collection*. Featuring bright, colourful visuals, *Panic! Dizzy* takes elements from *Planet Puzzle League, Magical Drop* and *Puzznic* that does *Dizzy* proud. It's all the more impressive because it was turned around in such a short space of time after *Wonderland Dizzy* was dropped from the compilation.



Wonderland Dizzy

» RELEASED: N/A

Wonderland Dizzy was another Aladdin Deck Enhancer title that was to be ported to the Master System. Although the Oliver twins planned to feature it in the new compilation that Codemasters was asking for, they were dismayed when they were told that it could only feature one adventure game. With *Dizzy The Adventurer* already completed, it made little sense to continue working on a game that was nowhere near completion, and so it was canned.

By the fans for the fans

If you're desperate for more Dizzy action, visit www.yolkfolk.com. Not only is it the ultimate website for all things Dizzy, but the Oliver twins have allowed its fan base to create games based on the Dizzy franchise



Dizzy The Remake

» RELEASED: 2004

» PROGRAMMER: ANTHONY SHERRATT

» DOWNLOAD IT FROM: TINYURL.COM/YZ4MR8J

Yes, it's just a remake of the original game, but there's still much to recommend about Anthony Sherratt's game. It plays brilliantly, for a start, with tight, precise controls, while the graphic style allows for far more expression on Dizzy's face. It's been around for quite a few years now, but if you consider yourself a fan of *Dizzy* and have never played it then you're not much of a fan. Highly recommended.

Dizzy And The Emerald Eye

» RELEASED: 2006

» PROGRAMMER: PETER TEAL

» DOWNLOAD IT FROM: TINYURL.COM/YF995FD

Amazingly, this was the only entry in a 2006 Easter competition that Yolkfolk.com held. Even if Peter had ended up with lots of competition, though, we'd have been very surprised if he didn't walk home with the prize, as this is an excellent adventure. While not overly long, it features wonderful 8-bit visuals, superb controls and plenty of clever puzzles. An excellent homage to the main series.





Dizzy Trivia 2008

» RELEASED: 2007

» PROGRAMMER: ADAM MARKEY

» DOWNLOAD IT FROM: TINYURL.COM/YH43HJ6

Do you think that you're a fan of *Dizzy*? Then download this new quiz from Adam Markey and prepare to have your world turned upside down. The 20 multiple-choice questions not only quiz you on the official games, but also those released by the fans. Therefore if you don't regularly hang out at Yolkfolk.com and know your expanded *Dizzy* universe, your score could be as embarrassing as ours.

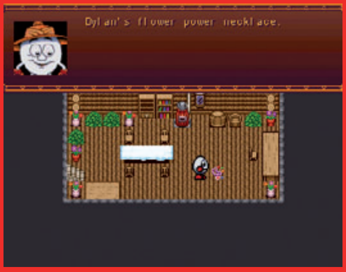
Dizzy RPG

» RELEASED: 2000

» PROGRAMMER: STEVE HARRINGTON

» DOWNLOAD IT FROM: TINYURL.COM/YJ5DNQC

Disappointingly, this interesting-looking game was never actually finished. It's a great shame that Steve Harrington was never able to finish his project, as what is available is great fun. Looking suspiciously like a popular SNES RPG, *Dizzy RPG* successfully transports our popular hero to a top-down arcade adventure and sees him trying to discover the whereabouts of the missing Yolkfolk. Yes, it's unfinished, but is still worth discovering.





Mini Dizzy

» RELEASED: 2003

» PROGRAMMER: DAVID NORMINGTON

» DOWNLOAD IT FROM: TINYURL.COM/YFH3LWA

Mini-games of classic retro titles have grown to become really popular lately, and this effort from David Normington is definitely worth a download. Shrinking many screens of normal *Dizzy* down to minuscule size, you have to speed through the screen, avoiding enemies and picking up and using a variety of different items. It's a great concept and works brilliantly.

All of the characters that had appeared in previous retail games were present and correct, the inventory system was even tighter than before, and there were huge locations to explore, many of which had featured in previous *Dizzy* games. While its puzzles are a little simplistic and its game design a bit too tough – Dizzy rapidly loses energy on contact with the game's many enemies – it's a wonderful little love letter to the series that allowed console owners to fully appreciate an 8-bit computer hero who's still revered today.

The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy even had time to feature a selection of fun mini-games, two of which, 'Dizzy Down The Rapids' and 'Bubble Trouble', were converted into standalone games. It wasn't all good news for *Dizzy*'s first console adventure, however, as legal wranglings between Codemasters and Nintendo over the Game Genie saw the game missing its potentially lucrative Christmas slot, instead getting released the following April. Despite strong scores from magazines at the time, it sold well under the expected sales.

Despite the disappointment with *Dizzy*'s sales, it remained one of Codemasters' best franchises, and in January 1992 a small team of programmers began work on what would become the last main *Dizzy* game. Scheduled for a December release and confined to the usual 8 and 16-bit systems, *Crystal Kingdom Dizzy* was business as usual, featuring cleverly crafted puzzles, an enjoyable story, and plenty of objects and characters to interact with. The level design and environments were also impressive, with the only thing letting it down being a ridiculously high price tag, despite the fact that the game wasn't a huge departure from previous budget offerings.

Crystal Kingdom Dizzy may have been the end of *Dizzy*'s main adventures, but there was still life lurking in the old egg, albeit life born from disaster. The Aladdin Deck Enhancer was released on the NES in 1992. It was a clever little cartridge device that effectively allowed you to increase the amount of RAM by inserting a smaller cartridge into it. *Dizzy The Adventurer*, an enhanced update of *Dizzy: Prince Of The Yolkfolk*, was released as a free



The Missing Dizzy



Clover: A Curious Tale

» RELEASED: 2009

» PROGRAMMER: BINARY TWEED

» BUY IT FROM: WWW.BINARYTWEED.COM

Originally available on the 360's Indie Games section and arguably the biggest homage to *Dizzy* you'll find, *Clover* is now available to buy on the PC. Created by Binary Tweed, it's a charming adventure that captures the spirit of early *Dizzy* games and wraps it up in some gorgeous watercolour visuals. The new PC version, entitled *Clover: A Curious Tale*, has been created with support from Blitz 1UP and features a variety of enhancements.



» Philip Oliver, half of 'the Oliver twins' and co-founder and CEO of Blitz Games.



» "There were several small attempts at merchandising *Dizzy* with bags, T-shirts, mugs and clocks. Unfortunately, it was before the real merchandising idea had become something that people were really aware of." Philip Oliver



» This video was released several years ago and depicted how *Dizzy* might look if he appeared on the PS2. Details can be found at **www.fantasticdizzy.co.uk**



pack-in, while *The Fantastic Adventures Of Dizzy* was also released. Meanwhile the twins and the rest of their team set to work on three additional games for the system: *Wonderland Dizzy*, *Go! Dizzy Go!* (which ended up as part of the *Quattro Arcade* compilation) and *Dreamworld Pogie*.

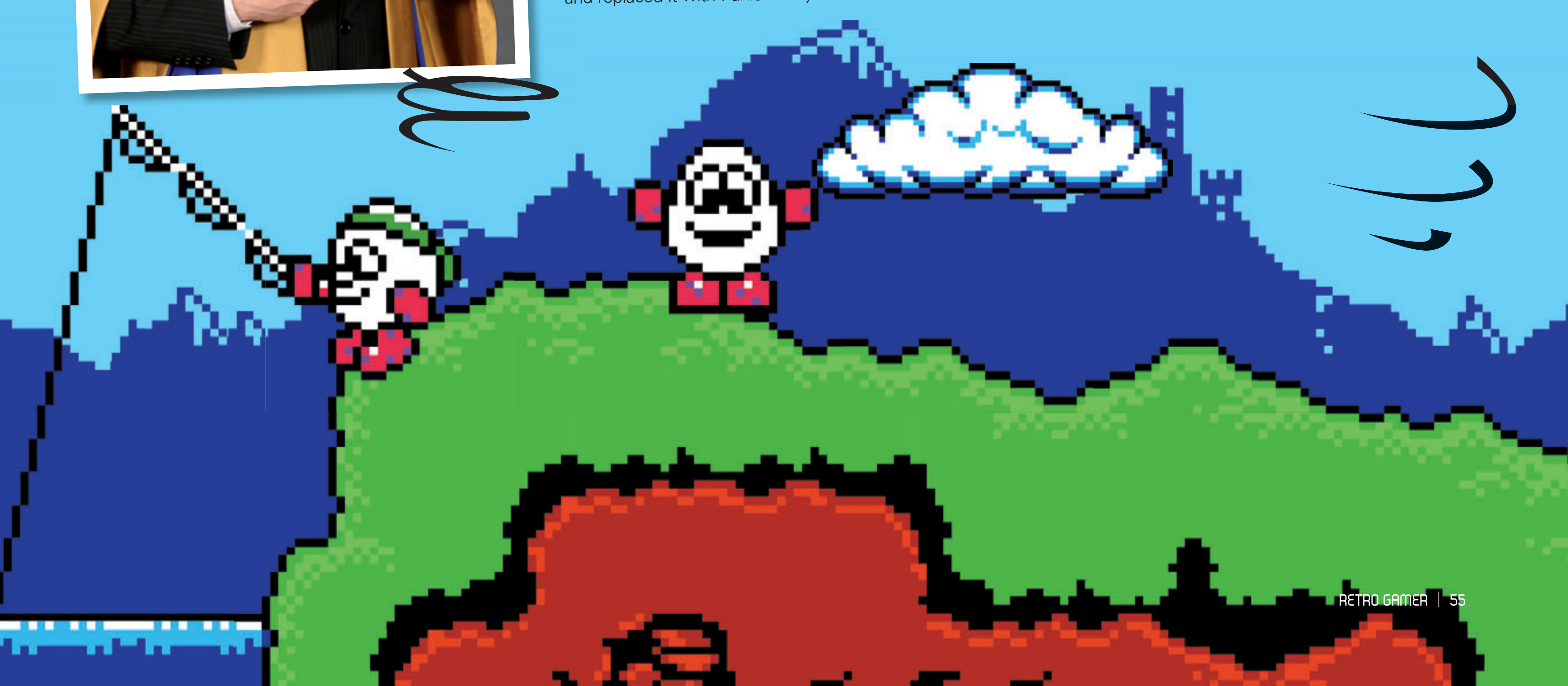
The tale of *Dreamworld Pogie*, which reached the alpha stage before it was cancelled, is particularly interesting, as it was the twins' attempt at a Mario clone. "We quickly discovered how great [the NES] was for side-scrolling platformers and discovered the original *Super Mario Bros*. We considered doing an arcade game for *Dizzy* like this, but felt that he should carry on being the adventurer. Instead we felt we could take Pogie, Dizzy's pet, and create a great side-scrolling arcade game for him to star in. Sadly it was never completed, as Codemasters decided to cancel all *Dizzy* games that were in production."

The Aladdin Deck Enhancer never enjoyed the same success as the Game Genie, and Camerica eventually went bust in 1992. The twins were left with three *Dizzy* games and no NES to sell them on, so looked at converting the titles to Sega's Master System. Their plan soon hit a brick wall, however, when Codemasters explained that it wouldn't be prepared to release them as full-price titles and wanted the brothers to produce a compilation. Unhappy with the prospect of losing out, but not wanting to lose the games entirely, they set to work on creating a compendium containing *Dizzy The Adventurer*, *Go! Dizzy Go!* and *Wonderland Dizzy*. They hit yet another brick wall when Codemasters revealed that it didn't want two adventure games on the compilation, so *Wonderland Dizzy* was dropped entirely and replaced it with *Panic! Dizzy* instead. *The Excellent Dizzy Collection* was eventually released in 1993 and the brothers, frazzled with the last year of working with Codemasters, decided to go it alone. And so one of gaming's most lovable heroes was laid to rest, never to return… Or will he?

"For many years, say from 1995 until 2005, there was no real way to bring *Dizzy* games back, particularly as his success was largely confined to the UK, and any game that's released has to be successful in the US if it's to make its money back. However, with the advent of digital distribution, who knows? There might just be a way to bring him back. The real question is: would people want to see him return?"

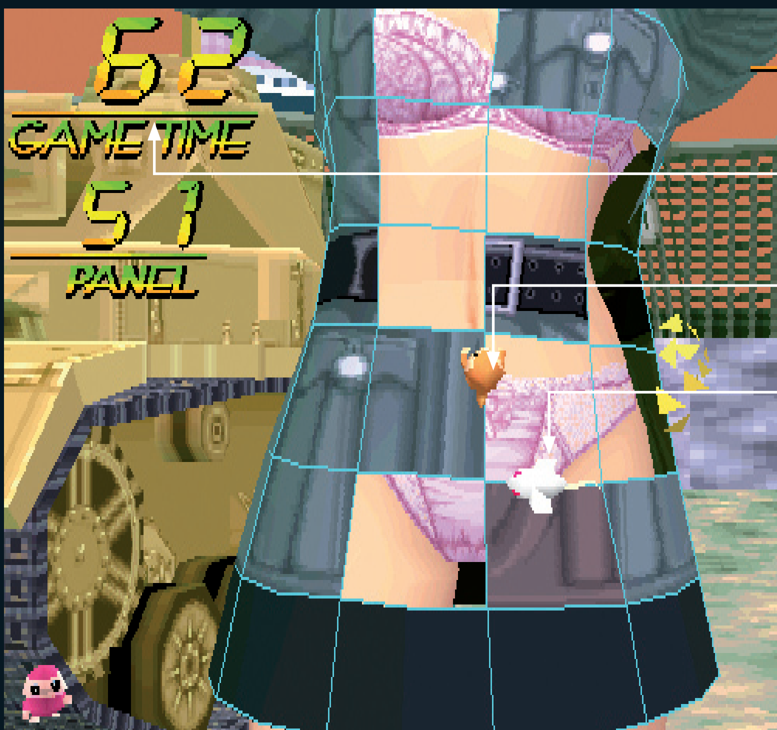
We've already personally pestered both twins about a *Dizzy* iPhone game or a release on Xbox Live or WiiWare, mainly because it's one of our favourite retro franchises. *Dizzy* may not have done anything revolutionary, but they were great games nonetheless and we'd love to see the character resurrected.

"I think the *Dizzy* games are remembered fondly because people had to think about the worlds and characters we created and, like a good book, people's imagination was let loose. What they were seeing was merely a small window into a fantastic magical world full of adventure, with interesting places, characters and stories to explore. The basic nature of the graphics in those days meant that gameplay was all, so if you gave people fun they'd keep coming back for more. It's very easy for developers to forget that these days."



THE UNCONVERTED

Arcade games that never made it home

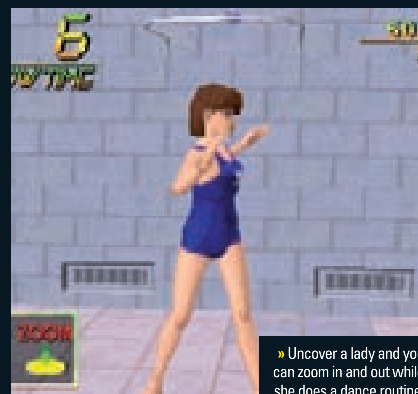


In Depth

» You only have a set amount of time to uncover each lady, so be sure to move as quickly as possible while avoiding enemies.

» We've no idea what this creature is, but you use him to uncover panels. Keep him safe at all costs.

» These little critters are fast, but if they're on a set of panels that you've completed you'll kill them.



» Uncover a lady and you can zoom in and out while she does a dance routine.





DANCING EYES

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year Released:** 1996 ■ **Genre:** Puzzle

■ **Only in Japan could a concept as nutty as *Dancing Eyes* get given the go-ahead. In its simplest form, this is nothing more than a polygon update of Konami's coin-op classic *Amidar*. The difference here, however, is that rather than paint over a simple grid, you now have to move your little ape thing over women's clothes in order to reveal panels and undress them. Once a lady has been fully unclothed, you then have several seconds of watching the scantily clad lass dance around. During this time you can zoom in and out on various parts of her body and perv away at your heart's content – should that be your thing, of course.**

Worry not, though, as this is no smut fest like the incredibly dodgy *Miss World 96* – don't play it in front of kids under any circumstances – for beneath its simplistic-looking polygons lurks a surprisingly polished game that actually manages to improve on Konami's excellent 1981 coin-op.

Panels are uncovered by simply dropping a peg down and then moving along the many lines that make up each body. Once you reconnect with your peg all potentially finished panels will flash. Release the fire button and the game will briefly pause as it follows your last chosen path, and any monsters it hits on the way are instantly destroyed. It's a clever spin on the usual *Amidar* gameplay that's heightened by a genuinely decent range of power-ups, ranging from typical speed-ups to the ability to turn into a giant and crush enemies.

The biggest issue we do have with *Dancing Eyes* is that enemies can occasionally creep up on you with little warning due to being hidden by the curvy ladies who you're trying to uncover. While this can be quite frustrating, later stages circumvent this issue by having you uncover objects – a shower curtain, an umbrella – to easily view enemies as they mill about at a safe distance.

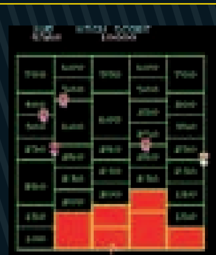
Interestingly, despite being released on PlayStation-compatible hardware, we've not discovered any proof of *Dancing Eyes* being released on a home system. While we're not surprised that no Western port exists – we're far more conservative about tawdry subject matter than our Japanese counterparts – it's a mystery why it never received a home conversion.

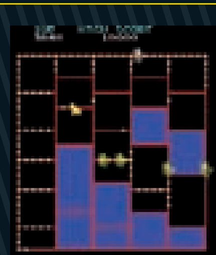
Dancing Eyes can be emulated outside of the arcade, but the experience isn't as smooth or as authentic as the original coin-op. It's nevertheless worth hunting down, though, simply because it's quite unlike any other game you've probably ever played.

Converted Alternative

AMIDAR 1981

Yes, we mentioned it last month, but *Dancing Eyes* is just a 3D version of Konami's fantastic arcade game, so it seems silly to mention anything else. Interestingly, despite its success in arcades, *Amidar* received hardly any home ports. The Atari 2600 version is fairly decent, especially when you consider the hardware limitations.





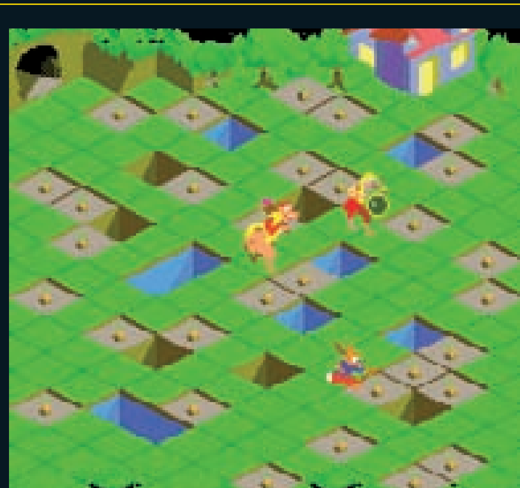
JACK RABBIT

■ **Developer:** Zaccaria
■ **Year Released:** 1984 ■ **Genre:** Maze/platformer

■ **Fans of *Crystal Castles* or *Q*Bert* should definitely check out this quirky little title by Zaccaria, as it shares many similarities with them.**

Utilising an isometric layout that's sometimes multi-tiered, you take on the role of the titular Jack Rabbit and must hop around the screen, collecting carrots and avoiding the game's many hazards. Weasels, bears and snakes are just a few of the critters you have to contend with, while natural hazards like pits, prickly bushes and pools of water must also be avoided. Matters are made worse by the fact that your opponents, who look suspiciously like Brer Bear and Brer Weasel, place bombs at strategic locations, giving you yet more danger to contend with.

While the isometric viewpoint can sometimes make judging jumps a little tricky, *Jack Rabbit* is nevertheless a highly entertaining game that uses enjoyable and challenging gameplay to mask its rather poor aesthetics. A limited arcade release could explain the lack of a home port, which is a real shame, as *Jack Rabbit* remains a charming little gem that has no doubt slipped under the radar of many gamers. Our advice is to try to rectify this as soon as possible.

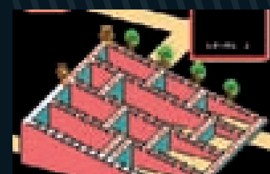


» You're required to pick up every carrot before you can continue.

Converted Alternative

CRYSTAL CASTLES 1988

Replace Jack Rabbit with a bear called Bentley and have him collect crystals instead of carrots. The end result is Atari's *Crystal Castles*, a superb platformer that's been converted to everything from the Atari 2600 to Microsoft's Xbox.



Converted Alternative

DOUBLE DRAGON 1987

Technos's excellent two-player brawler was ported to over 18 different systems, making it an alternative that's easy to get hold of. The Master System outing is definitely our favourite, although the GBA version should also be considered.



CRIME FIGHTERS

■ **Developer:** Konami
■ **Year Released:** 1989 ■ **Genre:** Scrolling fighter



» Konami's brawler is incredibly brutal, with access to a huge array of combos.

■ **While Capcom is generally regarded as the king of the scrolling fighter, Konami would continually give its Japanese competitor a good run for its money. *Crime Fighters* is a perfect example, being a ridiculously hectic slugfest that up to four players could participate in. Granted, the plot behind the game – rescue some kidnapped girls – is pretty slim, but story matters little when you're able to smash your opponent around the face with a lead pipe and then kick the hell out of him when he's lying defenceless on the floor. Brutal? Yes. Fun? Undeniably so.**

Juxtaposed with the violent gameplay is more than its fair share of humour, meaning that there are plenty of laughs to go along with all the bloodshed. Utilising a simple three-button control layout, Konami's fighter gives you access to an impressive array of moves, allowing your brawlers to pull off some striking combos. There are also plenty of weapons laying around to help you out, ranging from guns – very satisfying to use – to switchblades, which is handy as *Crime Fighters* is one tough cookie to master. A truly memorable scrolling beat-'em-up.

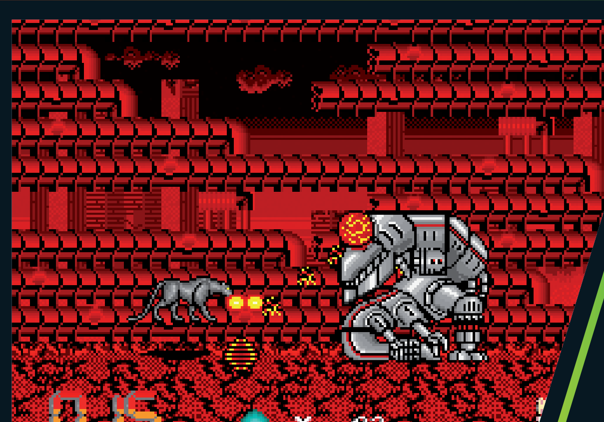
Best Left In The Arcade

BLACK PANTHER

■ **Developer:** Konami ■ **Year Released:** 1987 ■ **Genre:** Run-and-gun

■ **Now here is a game that's best left undiscovered. While the idea of a powered-up panther is rather novel, the execution of *Black Panther* is atrocious. For the large majority of the game, you only have access to a rather puny set of claws. Successfully taking down waves of enemies grants you with additional energy – you start with 50 health points – but before long you're constantly bombarded by foes with little chance of getting through a section unscathed.**

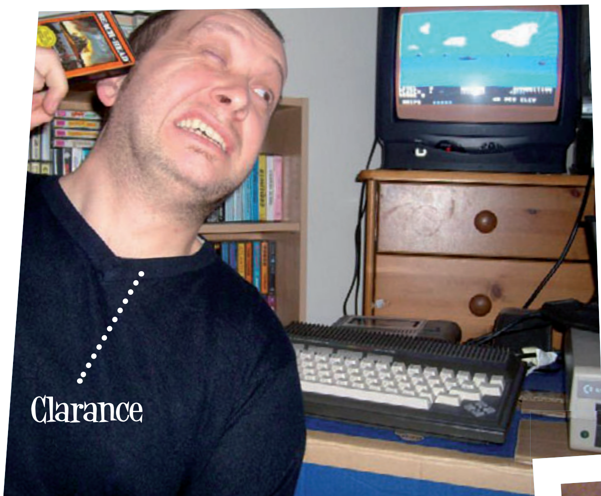
Black Panther harks back to a time when developers were more interested in parting you from your credits than giving you a genuinely enjoyable gaming experience, and it won't be long before you're looking for a far better, more fair alternative. You do get given other weapons later in the game, but the odds are so stacked against you from the get-go that you may as well take on the never-ending stream of foes with a spoon. Leave well alone.

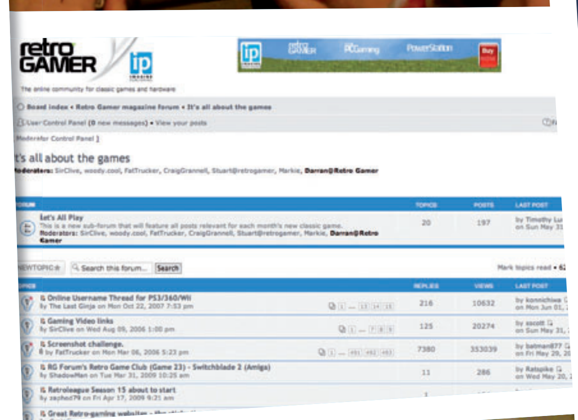


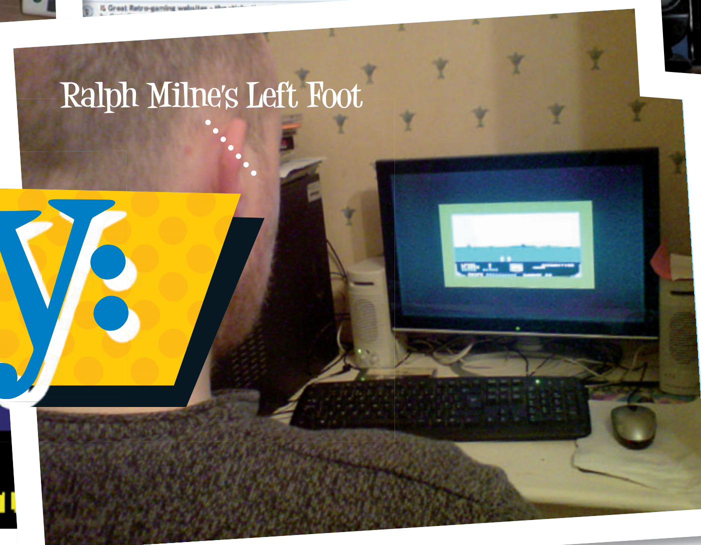
Bruce Carver's action-packed WWII selection box led the way for combat games, letting you blow aircraft out of the sky, ships out of the sea, and storm a fortified beach that wasn't Normandy… for a change



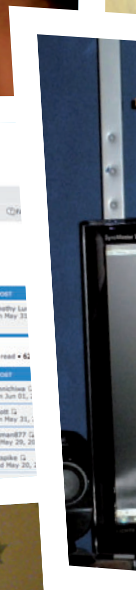












let's all play: Beach-Head



Information

Publisher: US Gold
Developer: Access Software
First Released: 1984
Featured System: Commodore 64

Those first impressions

Stuart I remember the first time I played this on my Amstrad and being impressed by the multilayered structure and presentation of the game. The non-scrolling nature of *Beach-Head* suited the non-scrolling nature of my CPC, and the presentation was impressive too – the game is just a great example of sights and sounds working together brilliantly. Further making me a fan was also the fact that *Beach-Head* was one of the few games that I could actually complete. In fact, I'd say it's one of the earliest examples of a 'procession' style game – à la *Gears Of War, Uncharted 2* – in which the developer seems to almost want to will you to the finish line so you can experience all the showy set pieces in the game and anxiously await the sequel.

The_Hawk I remember when this first came out it was a huge, huge game. I think I spent a lot of hours on it round a mate's house and seem to remember it being a lot of fun, but my memory is so fuzzy that playing it again will probably be like discovering a completely new (old) game.

thevulture One of the first C64 games I played. It was like taking part in some WWII flick on your C64, and the sound effects just struck me the most. The sonar ping and sploosh as a shell landed perilously close just created superb atmosphere.

Mayhem On the surface it really did amaze, with so many different sections, and although underneath it is a little shallow, you can always replay the game and try to better your score. Difficulty level four is NOT a pushover, I can tell you.

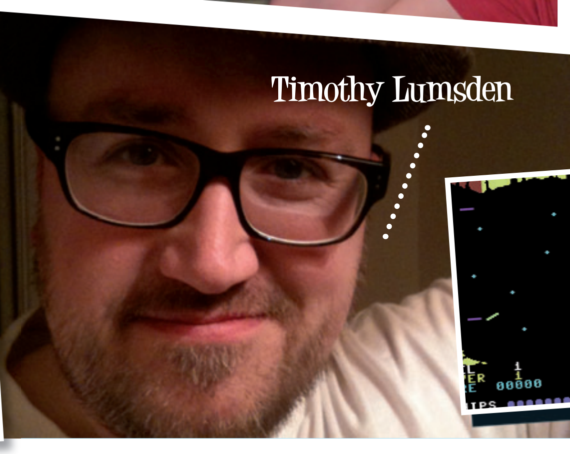
Paranoid marvin The plane/ship-destroying level looked awesome, and was definitely the highlight of the game. Continued play showed the game to be quite shallow, though, and easy to complete, but it's testament to the gameplay that it was a title I always returned to.

yakmag I remember playing this the first time round and couldn't believe my eyes! The way the planes flew from the carrier towards you looked and sounded like the real thing. Bombing the ships was brilliant – do you go for the carrier or not? The tank bit was amazing for the time. The only weak bit for me was the Spectrum-esque cave and torpedo bit; always thought that could have been better. Playing it now, it's like going to see an old friend who you've not seen for years. Just pick it up and play, no instructions to read, no manuals to plough through, just pure gameplay. For me it just took me right back to 1984. I can finish it almost every time I play it these days, but that doesn't take anything away from it.

Scapegoat I remember seeing the screenshots in magazines and pronouncing to all that it was impossible, then the smug look on my C64-owning mate's face when he called me round to play the game, and my jaw hit the floor. What a git. As a consequence, when I played this on the A8, despite it being a match for the C64 version in every way, it came as something of an anticlimax.


The Last Ginja


khisanth


Timothy Lumsden

★ Go deeper: trivia trail

» *Beach-Head* received a number of sequels. These games include *Beach Head 2000*, *Beach Head 2002* and *Beach Head Desert War*.

» A PlayStation port of *Beach Head 2000* was planned but never saw release. Screenshots and footage can be found online.

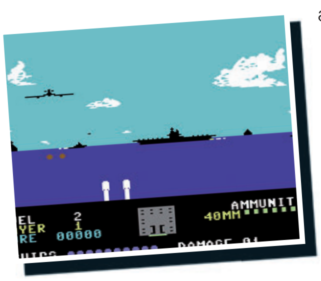
» *Beach-Head* was written by Bruce Carver. After a prolific career writing adventure games, Bruce died of cancer in 2005.

» 'Beachhead' is a military term given to the line of defence formed by units on a beach as they hold out for reinforcements.

Denny Hanes One of the megagames when it came out, with US Gold flashing the cash with single and double spread adverts in *Crash* and *Zzap!* to further whet the appetites of the gamers. Flashy graphics and the push to find out what lay beyond the first level spurred me on.

Why is it a classic?

Stuart For me the beauty of *Beach-Head* came from the fact that it was five games in one – only if you took the secret passage, though – with each section simple to grasp and feeling different from the next. *Beach-Head* had variety in spades, and while I would echo others' sentiments about it being a bit shallow, owing to the fact that the game can be finished without too much attrition once you know what you're actually doing, it's the sheer variety in its gameplay that hooks you and has you coming back for one more assault.



havantgottaclue For someone like me, born in the mid-Seventies, *Beach-Head* is the first game I ever remember really waiting for with bated breath while it loaded up, and is, for me, the very definition of the word 'classic'. Having started out as a Commodore 64 enthusiast with the modest charms of games from Mastertronic, Rabbit Software, Anirog and Bubble Bus, the all-American *Beach-Head* promised unprecedented variety, scope and presentation. The graphics were up there with the best of their time and the game sustained interest through the different challenges it set and the slick programming that made it all hang together so well. What's more, it still plays pretty well today.

paranoid marvin Right from the start the game smacked of professionalism. At a time when many games still didn't allow the player to define their own keys, the front-end interface with choice of controls, skill levels, number of players, and even allowing you to type in your name made the whole experience feel more polished and personal.

Mayhem It's the game that launched Access Software really and laid the foundations for much of their future success. It was also an early indicator of the quality of software available from the other side of the Pond at the time.



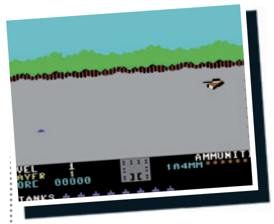
The Last Ginja It felt like a full-scale invasion on the dictator's country; manoeuvre your fleet either head-on or opt for a sneak attack. Next, take out the air assault, and then use your tank to smash down his front door. With each section having a knock-on effect to the number of tanks you had for the land assault, it made everything so tense. Brilliant game.

Khisanth For me the different sections were extremely good in their own right. Requiring skill, nerves of steel, judgement, and maybe a bit of luck. It was such a different and original game. If you had some friends with you, each of you might be good at a certain level so you could hand the joystick over and have a sort of co-op experience. The sense of satisfaction getting through the minefield or getting your tank through the course was superb!

Best moment

Darran I'd have to say that the best moment was the final section of the game where you had to destroy the dictator's fortress before its powerful turret destroyed you with a single shell. That section was just nail-biting, and the fact that if you failed you then had to replay the tricky beach section all over made it all the more tense. When you took out the last remaining white square, though, and the enemy signalled its defeat by waving a white flag, it was certainly worth it.

Lanky316 The first time I got every ship through. So many times I got over-excited, thinking I'd done it and losing the last one. I'm sure the neighbours heard how pleased I was.



britnostalgic It has to be the giant fortress in the last level where you had to adjust the degree of elevation of your gun to wipe out the enemy. The fortress was bloody massive, armed to the teeth, but was slow to aim. I lost my first two tanks in awe of its structure. With practice, and major loss of life, I eventually got the enemy to wave the white flag and surrender. Fantastic game!

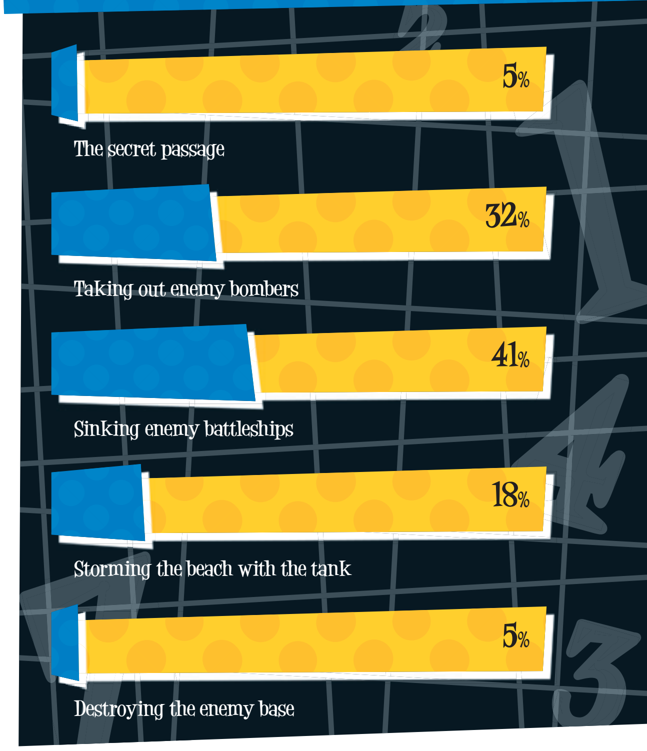
thevulture Getting my ships through the cavern was like taking my own life in my hands as torpedoes, bloody thousands of 'em, came right at us! I used to find my body temperature would rocket struggling with this section. Sweating buckets by the end of it.

ipmarks The way the huge gun would slowly turn towards you and the knowledge that if you slipped up too many times failing to shoot all the little squares then it would blow your bloody head off. Really edge-of-the-seat stuff for its day. It was also the first game I copied off a friend on a tape-to-tape recorder that actually worked, but I'd better keep quiet about that one, or I'll get one of them solicitor's letters that's going around.

sirclive_1 The best moment for me was actually the 'tank run' section. I was just so thrilled to finally get past the sea battle – I'd been

Forum Poll

This month: **Best section of Beach-Head**



let's all play: Beach-Head

playing it for over a year. It was before the days where every detail of every level had already been shown in a magazine, so not knowing what was next was exciting, and it's a damn fine level as well.

Danny Hanes The last level, without a doubt, the tension this builds up is a true marker of how retro games put to shame these so-called megagames of today, and let's not forget all these levels within 64k. Outstanding. Blowing up the bunker felt like a real achievement.

Chinnico Getting over each stage took me some time. With every new game, I managed to keep one more ship alive. The tank path was the hardest to master, so just reaching the fortress was a very rewarding experience. This means, of course, that the very best moment was the first time I managed to shoot the last fortress's white square with my only remaining tank and see the great cannon finally blow up. Then I realised that I could raise the difficulty level.



Kisanth I'd say probably the final section, shooting the holes of the big gun before your time runs out. The tense anticipation is just pant-wetting, desperately trying to finish it before the gun turns round and BOOM!

The Last Ginja The whole tank level, and when you finally made it through facing a huge mound with a massive gun on it. I got to this section many times before finally completing it. Still, it was no hassle to go back and replay all the earlier bits again.

In hindsight, the dictator was a bit of an idiot. He really should have kept the gun pointing forward.

Best version

Darran While I first played *Beach-Head* on my CPC, and felt it was a pretty good game, in later years I got to experience the C64 version and was really blown away. The C64 was, of course, the computer that Bruce Carver wrote the game on, and it does show. The game looks sublime and the sound effects are amazing. In fact, the sound is a real key element to *Beach-Head*'s charm and appeal, and, of course, would play a more important role in the sequel through the game's hysterical digitised speech. In my opinion the C64 is where the definitive version of the game is found.

Lanky316 NOT the atrocity that was the PlayStation remake. Just didn't have it like the C64 version. The C64 version is the best version. I just loved the whistling shells, followed by the splosh sound effects on the Battle Stations section and also the sweet sound of your anti-aircraft guns. Also, the risk factor element – do you brave the tricky secret passage section for a sneak attack or go direct but face more aircraft?

Timothy Lumsden I owned and liked the Amstrad version, but I remember at the time this was always thought of as a C64 game in playground spats. And the playground never lies.

Havantgottaclue I played the C64 version as a kid and it's hard to look past that. But I tried the Atari 8-bit version recently and there's barely any difference, except that the colour is a bit more vivid on the A8 version.

Matt_B I've played the Spectrum, C64 and the CPC versions. I'd say that the C64 is the best,



» [Amstrad] One of the main reasons that *Beach-Head* excels as a game is because it offers the player plenty of variety.



Classic game? You must be joking

Just because a game's praised, it doesn't mean that everyone is going to like it…

> The bombing of the ships is frustrating
>
> mrspud

> I could never get into Beach-Head. Way too slow and unexciting, and driving the ships through the cavern was like watching a fly trying to swim in treacle. Give me Raid Over Moscow any day
>
> SexyWane

> I can't bring myself to say it's a classic. To me, only the sequel is worthy of the tag 'classic'
>
> The vulture

Further play

Similar titles you may want to try

Beach-Head II: The Dictator Strikes Back

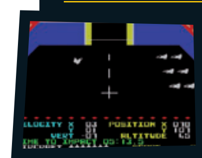
FEATURED SYSTEM: C64
YEAR RELEASED: 1985



Beach-Head II was a sublime sequel that retained the original's structure and great atmosphere but added a two-player mode and some hilarious digitised speech. In this version players could also assume the role of the heroic allies or the dictator.

Raid Over Moscow

FEATURED SYSTEM: ZX SPECTRUM
YEAR RELEASED: 1985



Very similar in terms of look and structure, *Raid Over Moscow* is seen by many as an unofficial follow-up to *Beach-Head*. This time the Pacific backdrop is switched for the Cold War and finds you having to prevent a nuclear attack on America by bad-tempered Ruskies.

Who Dares Wins II

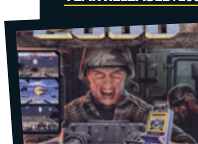
FEATURED SYSTEM: C64
YEAR RELEASED: 1985



Looking for another excellent war game for your microcomputer? Then one of the best you can find is this fantastic *Commando*-a-like. The game finds you assuming the role of SAS men dressed like ninjas who must take back eight towns that have been conquered by enemy forces.

Beach Head 2000

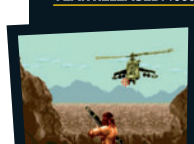
FEATURED SYSTEM: PC
YEAR RELEASED: 2000



Beach Head 2000 was first released in arcades, and was later ported to the PC. This update is basically a recreation of the gunner section from the first game, but finds you steering a turret on a beach and repelling approaching troops as they try to take the beach.

Rambo III

FEATURED SYSTEM: MEGA DRIVE
YEAR RELEASED: 1989



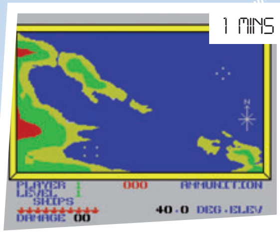
It might be far more tongue-in-cheek than the fairly straight-faced *Beach-Head*, but if 16-bit games are more your bag then why not give *Rambo III* on the Mega Drive a whirl? The game is a solid action blast, boasting nice presentation, great visuals and varied levels – all things that *Beach-Head* had in spades.

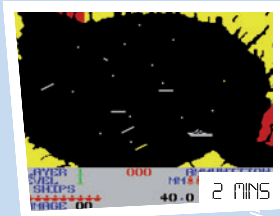
Moments in Time

We take you through the complete campaign of Beach-Head…

1 Map Screen

The Map Screen is the first screen you encounter in the game, and is where you get to plan your attack. You can either creep up on the enemy unawares by moving your fleet of ships to the secret passageway, which will see you having to negotiate a cave full of torpedoes and mines, or head straight down the enemy's throat, facing the full brunt of their air force.



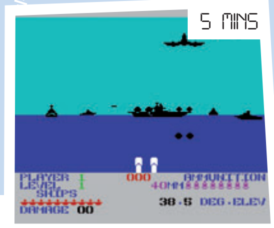


2 Secret

This is a tricky bit as you must get each of your battleships through this cave by avoiding the ridiculous number of mines and torpedoes that are buzzing beneath the water. Each ship you successfully get through is a life to take on to the next section – and you'll need all the lives you can get because the next bits are tricky.

3 Bomber

This section is split into two parts. The first sees you destroying enemy aircraft as they fly overhead, and if you'd taken the secret passageway this is where your sneakiness will pay off as you'll face far fewer planes. Survive the aerial attack, and then you must blow all of their ships out of the water by carefully adjusting the trajectory of your cannon.





4 Beach

This is the final gauntlet that stands between you and your enemy. You must steer each of your remaining tanks across the beach and to the dictator's base. En route you'll come across a number of obstacles, including barricades to negotiate and bunkers to destroy. This section requires nerves of steel and great reactions.

5 Citadel

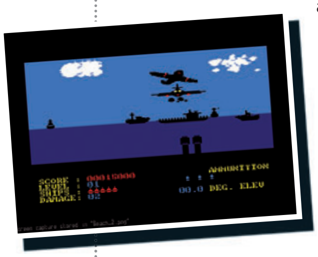
The final section sees you coming face to face with this imposing fortress. The dictator is inside, so blow it to smithereens to complete your mission. Positioned around the fort are a number of windows that must be destroyed when they flash white to do damage. Fail to destroy all of the windows before the rotating turret on top has you in its sights, and your tank is destroyed.



albeit for largely cosmetic reasons as they've all got very similar gameplay. The CPC is, typically, let down a bit by some grotty scrolling during the tank stage, and the Spectrum is limited in the sound department.

The sequels

Stuart What can you say other than that *Beach-Head II* was a superb sequel in every respect. Everything just felt more refined. Kicking things off with that great opening music, setting the scene of an epic war mission, plus more fantastical sound effects, which now feature hilarious digitised speech from the soldiers – I'm pretty sure that the Carvers must have been taking the piddle when they recorded those – as well as some great-looking graphics and variety in the challenges plus the excellent two-player mode. *Raid Over Moscow*, which I consider a sequel, however, I was less taken by. I just remember the game taking an age to load and getting perpetually worked up from trying to get my little planes out of the hangar. Maybe I'll return to it and see if my piloting skills have improved – they certainly can't have got any worse.



Mayhem *Beach-Head II* was something entirely different from the first game, and you could say directly set up for competitive play. Only the helicopter stage was weak in that respect. Be it trying to mow down the hapless soldiers in stage one, figuring out how to dupe the defences in stage two, and the manic knife-throwing of stage four. And as mentioned, there was the excellent speech to add to the atmosphere.

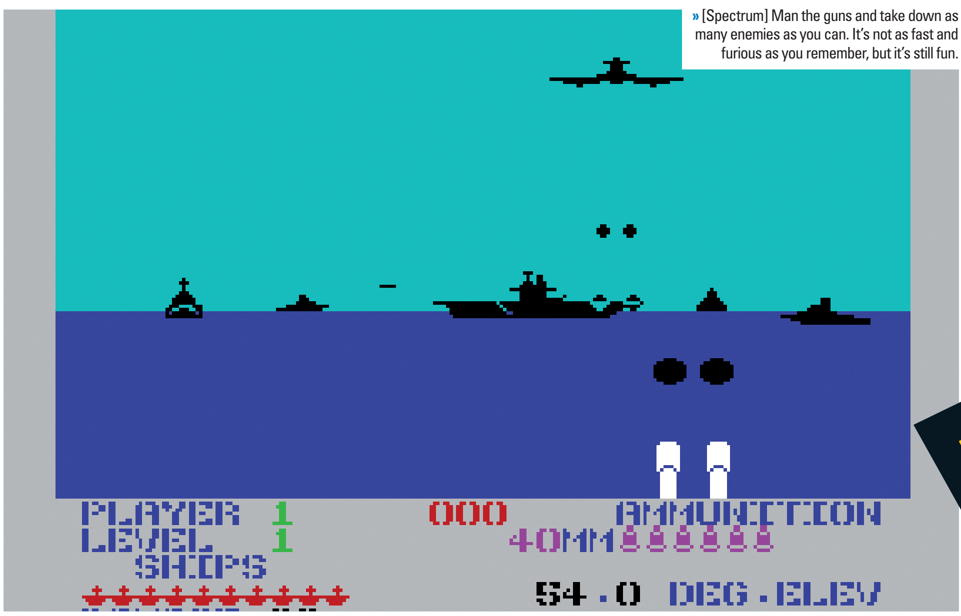
JetSetWilly *Beach-Head II* was okay but you can't beat the first. Bloody challenging and very addictive. Mind you, the third game in the arcade with the chair and massive joystick was also pretty good. Being able to change from heavy machine gun to 100mm cannon with a press of a button on your chair control is a good idea. It made me feel like I was controlling a massive cannon on the beach, protecting good ol' Blighty!

Ralph Milne's Left Foot *Beach-Head II* rocked. Two-player was consistently the most awesome thing ever. I can't play it in one-player now without feeling empty. *Raid Over Moscow* – great graphics, really hard. I spent years trying to get the planes out of the hangar – but wicked all round!

Paranoid marvin The arcade game was pretty cool, with the cannon/machine gun switching. As for *BH II*, it had a great first level, but you could pretty much forget the rest. The main problem was that it simply couldn't decide whether it was a one or two-player game, and ended up satisfying neither.

Romulous I only remember the original and *Beach-Head II*, and it was like eating chocolate for the first time playing *BH II*. I guess I'm gonna have to break out one of the Commodore 64s and get nostalgic.

Sexywane I like to think of *Raid Over Moscow* as a *Beach-Head* sequel. *Raid* got so many things right and felt a lot more polished than *Beach-Head*. Everything from the grenade launcher attack on the Kremlin to the *Discs Of Tron*-a-like level were simply brill, and the feeling of finally getting your squadron out the hangar is just unforgettable.



» [Spectrum] Man the guns and take down as many enemies as you can. It's not as fast and furious as you remember, but it's still fun.

Next Month's Game



Streets Of Rage 2

Want to join in the fun? Then head on over to **www.retrogamer.net/forum** now.

Famicom Disk System



VIRTUALLY UNKNOWN IN THE WEST BUT REVERED BY HARDCORE COLLECTORS WORLDWIDE, THE FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM IS A PIECE OF NINTENDO HISTORY. DAMIEN MCFERRAN TAKES A LOOK AT THE MACHINE ON WHICH SUCH ESTEEMED NINTENDO FRANCHISES AS ZELDA AND METROID MADE THEIR FIRST APPEARANCES

Given what we now know about add-on hardware for games consoles, the very concept of the Famicom Disk System seems hopelessly flawed. Since this Japan-only system hit the market in 1986, we've seen the equally ill-fated Sega Mega-CD, Sega 32X and Nintendo 64DD all come and go without making any impression on the market. However, one should never underestimate the benefit of hindsight; back in '86 the rules were still being written, and certainly from Nintendo's perspective, the idea of expanding the potential of its bestselling Famicom home console – or NES, as it's better known in this part of the world – seemed like an eminently sensible move.



» Nintendo's Disk Cards in all their glory. The format was derived from Mitsumi's Quick Disk floppy standard.

To get a better understanding of how the Famicom Disk System came to be, you need only survey the Japanese gaming industry back in the mid-Eighties. It's no exaggeration to say that Nintendo was the dominant force, effortlessly brushing aside rival companies and snapping up third-party support from all of the nation's finest code shops. By 1985 Nintendo was finding that gamers were so ravenous for new product that it was almost impossible to keep up with the intense demand; given this passionate interest in all things Famicom-related, it's easy to see why Nintendo started to investigate other avenues of making cash. Expanding the functionality of the millions of Famicoms already sitting in homes up and down Japan was the most logical course, so it was decided that the existing base unit should be augmented by a separate piece of hardware, permitting bigger and better games. With this objective in mind, Nintendo cast its gaze towards the home computing sector for inspiration.

"Floppy diskettes were quickly becoming the new standard for storage media on personal computers," explains avid Famicom collector Corbie Dillard. "Nintendo saw this technology as a viable solution for not only storing the games themselves, but also allowing game data to be saved directly to the diskette, so the company went ahead and created a proprietary diskette – dubbed 'Disk Card' – based upon Mitsumi's Quick Disk format."

Fellow enthusiast Laurent Kermel – who is employed at DreamWorks Pictures as a 3D and CGI artist when he's not collecting rare Famicom items – explains just how much of a technological advancement these unassuming disks were: "Famicom disks represented a revolution. They offered twice the storage capacity of existing cartridges and were a lot cheaper to produce. Players could also save their game's progress without relying on cumbersome passwords; it has to be remembered that cartridges with save functionality using inbuilt batteries simply didn't exist at that time."

The most refreshing element of this increased storage was that it cost the end user less to purchase a Disk System game than a standard Famicom cartridge. "Because Disk Cards were cheaper to produce than cartridges, some of these savings were passed on to the consumer," says Dillard. "Disk System titles retailed for around ¥2,500-3,000 – quite a bit less than the ¥5,000-7,000 price tag for new cartridge titles at that time."

As well as offering increased capacity for larger games and the ability to record in-game progress, the Disk System promised a more compelling aural experience thanks to an additional audio channel for FM synthesis. "This allowed programmers to add yet another layer of sound to a game and was generally



“Back in ’86 the rules were still being written, and the idea of expanding the Famicom seemed like a sensible move”



Romero Remembers

When I was working at Origin in 1987, they had a Famicom Disk System. The 3.5” disks were made of hard plastic and looked like Fisher-Price toys. The only game I ever used to play on it was the wonderful *Super Mario Bros 2*. This was the original Japanese version that was very similar to the first *Super Mario Bros*, but way harder. I remember how cool the blowing leaves in the wind were. Happy memories.

Specifications

Year released: 1986

Original price: ¥15,000

Associated magazines: *Weekly Famitsu*

Why the Famicom Disk System was great: With increased storage, the ability to save your game, and the introduction of an additional sound channel, the Famicom Disk System certainly felt like a step forward in ’86. While these features soon became irrelevant as cartridge technology progressed, the Disk System retains a sense of uniqueness; collecting for this format is possibly one of the most rewarding retro-gaming pastimes available.

Instant Expert

Famicom Disk System games were double-sided and could hold up to 112 kilobytes of data.

Nintendo continued to repair and support the Disk System right up until 2003.

During its lifespan 4.5 million Disk System units were sold – all in Japan, as the machine was never released anywhere else in the world.

The main menu music of the Nintendo GameCube console is actually the same tune used on the FDS start-up screen, only played at a slower speed.

Just like standard floppy software, FDS cards had tabs that could be removed to prevent the data being overwritten.

The Disk System launched with seven titles: *Baseball, Golf, Mahjong, Soccer, Super Mario Bros, Tennis* and *The Legend Of Zelda*.

All Night Nippon *Super Mario Bros* is one of the rarest titles available for the Disk System. A modified version of the original *SMB*, it featured graphics based on the popular Japanese radio show of the same name. It was given away on the show in 1986.

The Disk System mascot was known as ‘Disk-kun’ (meaning ‘Mr Disk’ or ‘Disk Boy’ in English) and has managed to outlive the machine itself – he features in *Super Smash Bros Melee* on the GameCube.

Just like its predecessor, *Legend Of Zelda 2: Link no Boken* (better known as *Zelda II: The Adventure Of Link* on the NES) was a Disk System exclusive in Japan.

Around 184 games were released for the Disk System. If you include the gold label re-releases that number rises to 212.

“Nintendo maintained that the cream of the crop would be exclusive to the Disk System”

used for percussion-type effects playing in the background, although it was sometimes used for creating additional individual sound effects as well,” explains Dillard.

The system was launched in February 1986 for the princely sum of ¥15,000, which represented quite an investment on the part of the customer. However, Nintendo maintained that from that point onwards the cream of the Famicom crop would be exclusive to the Disk System, and in the early years of the machine’s life, this was certainly the case. “The standard-bearers for the format are *Metroid* and *The Legend Of Zelda*,” explains Sean Corse of Famicom Dojo. These highly ambitious new games were coded with the Disk System in mind and were – in the beginning at least – exclusive to the new format. “Both were long adventures that required multiple gaming sessions to complete, facilitated by the Disk System’s save feature,” adds Corse. Other notable FDS ‘exclusives’ were *Hikari Shinwa: Parutena no Kagami* (*Kid Icarus*), *Akumajo Dracula* (*Castlevania*) and *Super Mario Bros 2* (known as *The Lost Levels* in the West). Such quality software clearly had the desired effect: half a million FDS units were sold in the space of three months and that figure would eventually rise to an impressive 2 million by the time 1986 drew to a close. It seemed as if the Famicom’s almost uncontrollable popularity had ensured that the new format would be a rousing success almost by default.



» Nintendo’s decision to omit a protective shutter on the Disk Cards would prove to be a costly mistake.

However, possibly the most audacious part of Nintendo’s new scheme was the installation of ‘Disk Writer’ kiosks in retail outlets all over Japan. “These allowed Famicom owners to purchase a blank Disk Card for ¥2,000 and then insert it into the kiosk to have a game of their choice written to it for an additional ¥500,” explains Dillard. “Because the Disk Cards were rewritable, consumers could then bring their disk back to the kiosk to have a new game written over it when they’d finished their previous one.” This system was truly groundbreaking for its time and could be considered a forerunner of more modern distribution methods. “Xbox Live Arcade, PlayStation Network and Steam provide essentially the same service, except the ‘disk’ is your console or computer hard drive and the ‘kiosk’ is a server you access over the internet,” argues Corse.

Another aspect of the system that was arguably ahead of its time was the ability to submit scores to Nintendo using specially produced ‘Disk Fax’ machines scattered throughout Japan. “From 1987, Nintendo organised contests where players from all over the country could send in their best scores for games such as *Golf Japan Course* or *F1 Race*,” reveals Kermel. “These scores would be sent to Nintendo headquarters using Disk Fax units.” Specially produced ‘blue disk’ versions of games were manufactured for this very purpose, and the best players would be awarded prizes for their efforts. The entire notion is very similar to the online leaderboards that are so common in today’s internet-ready games.

While the fledgling format obviously had incredible advantages, it wasn’t all positive: “The disks were a lot more fragile than cartridges and most of them didn’t come with a shutter to protect the magnetic film from fingerprints, dust or scratches,” laments Kermel. Instead of a protective shutter, Nintendo opted for the cheaper alternative of a wax sleeve, which the disk was stored in when not in use. Gamers who had spent the past few years treating their fairly rugged carts with disdain now had to handle Disk Cards with almost painstaking care; even placing a disk near a television was a no-no, because the magnets inside the TV’s speakers could demagnetise the data. Taking all of these points into account, it’s hardly surprising that many disks eventually become unplayable, plagued with random ‘bad sectors’, which led to numerous loading errors. While Nintendo was happy to exchange affected titles, the fragile nature of the medium made it seem like a poor second to the robust and seemingly indestructible cartridges that Famicom users were accustomed to.



» *Kid Icarus* is another beloved Nintendo franchise that started out as a Disk System release. Because the unit never came out in the West, it was ported to the NES in cart form.









» This colourful comic was produced in order to educate Japanese youngsters about the strengths of the new format.

Separated at birth

Such was the groundswell of anticipation surrounding the release of the FDS format that Nintendo even entered into a deal with electronics giant Sharp, which allowed the firm to produce an all-in-one Famicom and Disk System machine, dubbed the Twin Famicom. Launched shortly after the release of the standalone FDS module, this hybrid console remains a firm favourite with collectors even today. “It was a slick system that allowed A/V output rather than the RF that was standard on Famicoms of the era,” explains Kevin Tambornino of Famicom Dojo.

“The system comes in two flavours: a simple version and a redesigned edition with auto-fire controllers,” adds Laurent Kermel. “However, like the Famicom, the controllers are hard-wired into the unit, which is a real pain.”

Given Nintendo’s notoriously protective attitude towards its products, such a union is surprising but hardly unique. “Nintendo has often depended on electronics partners to create its gaming machines,” explains Sean Corse. “They partnered with Sony to develop the SNES sound chip and later infamously approached them – and eventually Philips – to create a CD-ROM add-on. More recently, Panasonic designed the Q, a version of the GameCube that can play DVDs.”

Community



Nintendo Life

www.nintendolife.com

■ One of the net's finest Nintendo-centric sites, Nintendo Life has a burgeoning retro section, which covers all elements of the company's history. By the time you read this, Corbie Dillard's excellent Famicom Collector's Guide should be live.



Famicom Dojo

www.famicomdojo.tv

■ Operated by Sean Corse and Kevin Tambornino, Famicom Dojo is a series of video segments focusing solely on the pastime of collecting Famicom games and hardware. Be sure to check out the episode with the ultra-rare FDS 'Disk Checker'.



Video Game Den

www.videogameden.com

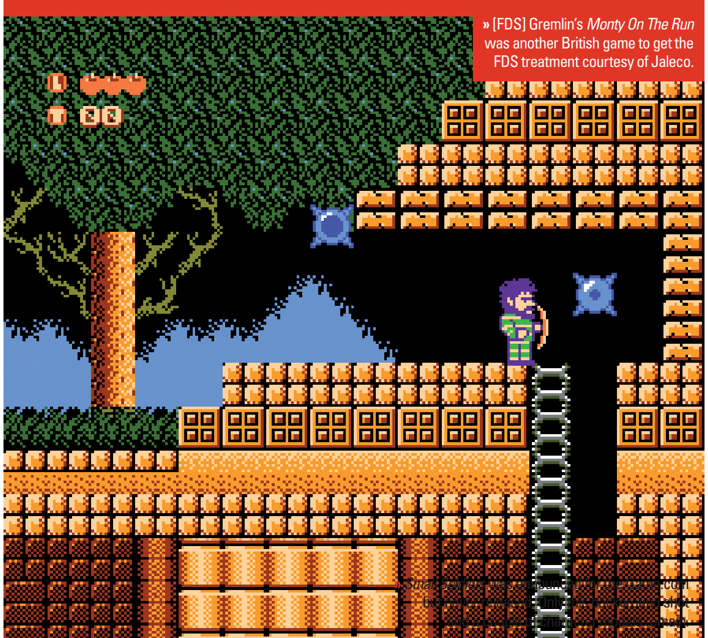
■ The home of the insanely talented Laurent Kermel, Video Game Den has a massive section devoted to the Disk System. Kermel has even gone to the trouble of translating the massive comic-book manual, which came with the machine in Japan.



Famicom World

famicomworld.com

■ A repository for all things Famicom, this excellent site has a large section relating to the Famicom Disk System as well as handy user guides and an active forum, where you can trade rare games and hardware with like-minded collectors.



» [FDS] Gremlin's *Monty On The Run* was another British game to get the FDS treatment courtesy of Jaleco.



» Finding a second-hand Disk System in Japan is relatively easy, but finding one that actually works is another matter entirely.

Piracy was another issue that was exacerbated by the introduction of rewritable software. This is unsurprising when you consider that the disks were very similar to those used by home computers such as the Atari ST and Amiga, both of which suffered terribly from users copying software rather than actually buying it legitimately.

"Even with safeguards to modify the disk drive tech in a proprietary fashion, it couldn't stop those who were sufficiently determined," explains Corse. "There was quite a bit of money to be made in porting cartridge-only games to disk and selling them at insane profits. Nintendo went though several revisions of the FDS drives and introduced on-disk piracy prevention software, but these were cracked in a matter of months. Bootleggers were able to hook two units together and quickly copy disks, and programs like Disk Hacker allowed you to copy disks on a single machine with disk swapping. It's impossible to calculate how many sales were lost due to piracy, especially for the lower-profile third-party titles."

This aspect of the Disk System saga would have a long-lasting effect on the outlook of Nintendo itself. "Given how terribly Nintendo got burned by this massive downside to their own device, it's understandable how concerned they were with the possibilities when switching to CD and DVD formats later on," adds Corse.

While such rampant piracy was obviously a concern and would have put off many third parties from supporting the system, Nintendo's typically despotic attitude towards publishers arguably had a more significant effect. Nintendo already had many companies under lock and key thanks to the excessive agreements relating to the licensing of Famicom cartridges, but when the company sensed that the Disk System could herald a new era of success, it went for the jugular. Nintendo wanted half of the copyright for every single FDS title published – a truly overwhelming demand, which basically meant that externally developed games would become, in part at least, Nintendo's own property. While many publishers were all too happy to sign on the dotted line to begin with, they were dissuaded when the FDS began to lose the technical lead it had over cartridges. "Soon after the release of the Disk System, cartridges reached the 128k mark and started to include inbuilt batteries," explains Kermel. With two of the key advantages of the format being removed so early in the game, the FDS struggled to remain a viable option.

"In the beginning, many companies jumped on the FDS bandwagon because it allowed them to make bigger and more innovative projects," says Kevin Tambornino of Famicom Dojo. "However, as chips and carts got cheaper, companies started having the option of bigger cartridges and battery backup memory for save games." Third parties preferred cartridges because they could be purchased by any Famicom owner, not just those select few that had committed to the Disk System cause. While Nintendo was quick to point out that Disk System games were far less expensive than cartridge-based ones, publishers weren't so keen because the lower cost made it harder to turn a



Perfect Five

TOBIDASE DAISAKUSEN

» **RELEASE:** 1987
» **PUBLISHER:** DOG
» **DEVELOPER:** SQUARE
» **BY THE SAME PUBLISHER:** JJ (FAMICOM)

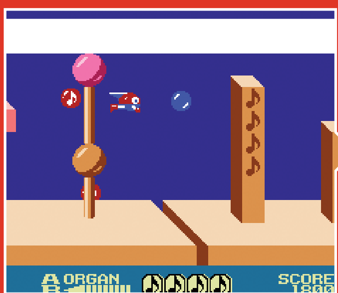
01 **Designed by the** creator of *Final Fantasy*, Hironobu Sakaguchi, this 3D shooter was very similar to Sega's *Space Harrier*, which had already hit arcades by the time this game made it to market. *Tobidase Daisakusen* came with a pair of cardboard 3D glasses and was released on the NES as *3-D WorldRunner*.



OTOCKY

» **RELEASE:** 1987
» **PUBLISHER:** ASCII CORP
» **DEVELOPER:** SEDIC
» **BY THE SAME PUBLISHER:** SOUND FANTASY (SNES)

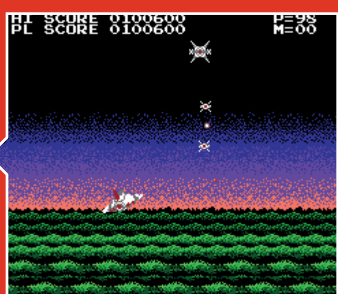
02 **Regarded by many** as the forerunner to *Rez*, *Otocky* is a scrolling shooter where the player's on-screen performance influences the background music. Created by Japanese installation artist Toshio Iwai – who would later produce the sublime *Electroplankton* for the Nintendo DS – this truly unique piece of software sadly never saw release outside of its native Japan.



FALSION

» **RELEASE:** 1987
» **PUBLISHER:** KONAMI
» **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
» **BY THE SAME PUBLISHER:** ARUMANA NO KISEKI

03 **This overlooked blaster** is considered to be an off-shoot of the *Gradius* series and is one of the few titles to support Nintendo's 3D Goggles. If you've played the likes of *Starfox* or *Galaxy Force* then you'll know what to expect, but what sets this apart is the smooth scrolling and the well-animated enemies. *Gradius Gaiden*'s Falchion Beta is based on the craft in this game.



SUPER MARIO BROS 2

» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO EAD
» **BY THE SAME PUBLISHER:** BASEBALL

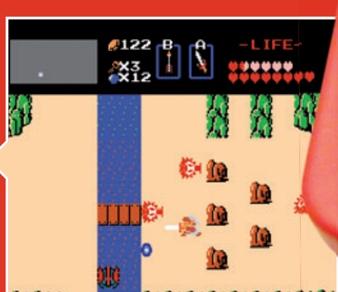
04 **Not to be** confused with the Western *SMB2*, this Japan-only release is visually quite similar to its predecessor but the difficulty has been ramped up considerably. The two-player mode found in the first title is omitted and there are various minor tweaks to the gameplay, but this is essentially an extension of the original intended to challenge those players who consider themselves to be *Mario* masters.



ZELDA NO DENSETSU

» **RELEASE:** 1986
» **PUBLISHER:** NINTENDO
» **DEVELOPER:** NINTENDO R&D4
» **BY THE SAME PUBLISHER:** ZELDA 2: LINK NO BOKEN

05 **Regardless of how** familiar you are with this game, it's worth finding in its FDS guise. At the time of release there was simply no way that the cartridge format could contain such an epic adventure, and the ability to save your progress was essential.



massive profit – something that they had been led to expect after years of growth with the standard Famicom system. The Disk Writer kiosks were an even bigger threat: offering new games for ¥500 didn't leave much room for anyone to make significant returns. Some companies even went as far as to shift entire development teams from working on FDS software to producing cartridge-based games. "*Final Fantasy* was originally a Disk System game but before it was released, Square shifted it to cartridge," reveals Tambornino. The ramifications of this switch could certainly be deemed incredibly significant, given the subsequent global success of the RPG franchise. "Had Square not switched formats, *Final Fantasy* would now be co-owned by Nintendo," he adds.

To make matters worse, the Disk System units themselves began to display worrying reliability issues. "It wasn't uncommon to be treated to a cryptic disk error that only displays a number without explanation," says Corse. These problems could be related to a number of factors, such as dust on the disk, demagnetisation, or issues with the reader head speed, but many users discovered that the rubber belts inside the machine, which controlled the spinning of the disks, were the ultimate cause of the fault. The bands would start to break over time, with some even melting during use. Nintendo's proclivity for proprietary components made replacing this everyday item more complicated than it probably should have been. "Unfortunately, like the disks themselves, the drive band is not standard. An actual rubber band is not the correct elasticity," says Corse. The only option was to get in touch with Nintendo to obtain a replacement.

By the time 1989 arrived, many publishers had ditched the machine entirely and had returned to the more profitable Famicom cartridge format. Game stores began to complain that the now-ignored FDS kiosks were taking up valuable space, and even Nintendo itself began to abandon the system; much-hyped FDS exclusives were re-tooled for release on cartridge – a sure sign that the company had ultimately lost faith in the format. Although it was alluded to at the time, a Western launch was never really on the cards, much to the chagrin of many Nintendo fans.

"It was a bizarre decision, given that the NES hardware was designed with this particular expansion in mind," says Corse. "However, one can count many good reasons in the wake of the Disk System's release. Would North America accept a glitchy system when the NES 'toaster' hardware already had so many problems compared to the original Famicom? The piracy and unlicensed games were certainly an even greater issue and threatened to harm the 'Seal of Quality' branding that helped assure a sceptical public that the Atari apocalypse would never happen again."

While the FDS sold a fairly respectable 4.5 million units by the

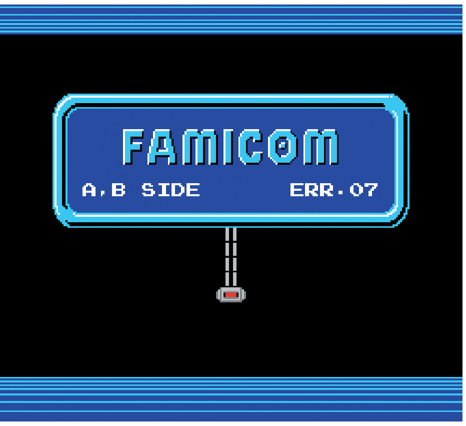




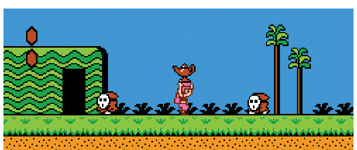
Batteries not included

One of the most unique aspects of the Disk System hardware is the ability to power the unit using C-cell batteries. While this might lead you to assume that the device is portable, there's actually a more mundane reason for this option. "It certainly wasn't a portability issue, since the Famicom itself still had to be wired to the TV and the outlet," explains Famicom Dojo's Sean Corse. "But therein lay the answer: since both sockets would be used by the TV and Famicom, the battery solution reduced demand for a third socket. The batteries are actually a more economical solution, since the Disk System doesn't require continuous power during play. Besides, have you ever tried to hook up two AC power bricks to the same outlet? It's not pretty."





» The infamous 'Disk Error' screen – an all too common sight when using the FDS, sadly.



Nintendo's 'Fake' Mario

When Nintendo EAD produced the sequel to the bestselling *Super Mario Bros*, it created a title that was incredibly similar to the original – it even had the same music and enemies. The Japanese team had intended the game to be a more challenging upgrade rather than a complete re-imagining, but Nintendo's American arm was less enthused; Nintendo of America president Howard Lincoln famously harboured an intense dislike for the game. He believed that the elevated level of difficulty coupled with the almost identical visuals would put off American gamers. Instead of releasing it in the US – where NOA believed that it would flop – it was decided that another Shigeru Miyamoto-created FDS title would be retooled in its place. *Yume Kojo: Doki Doki Panic* went on to become Mario's second NES outing in the West, and the original Japanese sequel would later be released on the Super NES as part of the *Super Mario All-Stars* compilation. Because of its rather unique history, *Doki Doki Panic* is understandably popular with FDS collectors.





» The launch of the 64DD proved that Nintendo doesn't always learn from its mistakes.

end of its lifespan, Nintendo had been banking on far more impressive figures. However, regardless of the various problems faced by the machine at the time, there's a compelling argument that the entire concept was flawed.

"As a general rule, gamers don't like to have to purchase additional add-ons for their game consoles," says Dillard. "When you start splitting your core audience like that, you're in for trouble." Had the Disk System offered something that the standard Famicom wasn't capable of then the story might have been different, but the rapid progression of technology quickly made it redundant.

"The Disk System was created to reduce production costs inherent in cartridges and to sustain game save states," says Corse. "Following Moore's Law, the technology for both cartridge production and battery backup saves for ROMs improved to the point where cost was not the issue it was in the early Eighties. This was put to the test when *The Legend Of Zelda* came out in 1987 on a battery backup cartridge; following this breakthrough, Nintendo didn't look back. The only benefit offered by the FDS in the end was superior sound, but who would miss what they hadn't experienced?" Ultimately, the FDS was overtaken by the standard cartridge format that it had sought to supplant; carts were more reliable, more robust, and offered publishers a better chance of turning a profit on their hard work.

Ironically, the system's dismal retail performance, shaky reliability, and issues with piracy have made it something of a darling with Nintendo enthusiasts. "It allows collectors to play lost games that were never available on cartridges," replies Kermel when asked to explain the appeal of collecting for this system. "I myself rediscovered games such as *Zelda no Densetsu*, *Metroid* or *Akumajo Dracula* thanks to the enhanced sound chip. It is an amazing feeling to play *Zelda* as Japanese gamers did way back in 1986. Also, some Disk System games have incredible packaging; because the software was cheaper to produce, several publishers created fancier boxes and instruction manuals."

Tambornino was drawn to collecting not necessarily for the games but the exotic nature of the platform. "Like collecting LaserDiscs in a world that has DVDs, most FDS collectors do it for the feeling more than anything else," he explains. "Sure, there are some games that are exclusive for the format, but most of the good ones have been re-released on other systems. From a visual perspective, the disks have art, design and themes that represented that part of the Eighties. I remember reading about these games when I was a kid growing up; they seemed so exotic to me at the time and I never really saw myself owning them. Maybe I collect them now because I couldn't then."

However, collecting for the Disk System isn't as straightforward as it is with the traditional Famicom. For starters, finding a unit in working order is a considerable challenge due to its reliability issues. "A brand new Disk System bought at launch would usually last a good few years without a problem," explains Tambornino. "When buying one now you're likely to encounter all sorts of problems, from broken drive belts to gears out of alignment. If you buy a Disk System that hasn't been opened up then chances are the drive belt inside will be broken – it's simply beyond its shelf life. The best systems to buy are mint condition units that have had the belt replaced."

It's not just hardware problems that make FDS collecting such a minefield: the delicate temperament of the Disk Cards themselves can make buying games tricky. "Any dust or scratches on the magnetic surface can make the disk completely inoperable," says Corse. This is, of course, assuming that the game you purchase is actually the game you thought you were getting: the rewriteable nature of the disks means that securing untampered software is equally difficult – but again, this can be part of the intrinsic appeal. "It's like a treasure hunt," says Tambornino. "In my experience what is on the label is only correct about 60 per cent of the time – you never know what you are going to get when you load a game. But on the other hand you might stumble across a hidden gem. For example, I once found the highly sought-after *All Night Nippon Super Mario Bros* on an unlabelled disk! If you buy disks from an import shop you might want to make sure they have been tested first, or you can take your chances. Frankly, that's half the fun."

Ultimately, though, such tribulations are unlikely to dissuade the hardcore collector. The FDS is beloved by such devoted individuals despite the problems of the machine, and it's easy to see the appeal. "Being able to play the game that became our *Super Mario Bros 2* with the original characters and the additional sound channel of the FDS is great for fans of the original US release," says Dillard. "It's also nice to be able to experience the amazing Disk System soundtracks of NES titles like *Metroid* and the *Legend Of Zelda* titles before they had their music altered for release on cartridge."

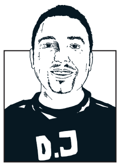
Indeed, for Nintendo completists the FDS is an essential purchase, and as the number of working units in the field slowly diminishes over time, it's only going to become more attractive for retro devotees with money to burn.

Special thanks to reader Mat Corne for supplying us with his Famicom Twin Disk system

Game Over

IT'S A BIT NIPPY IN HERE

» RETROREVIVAL



» AMSTRAD CPC
» DINAMIC
» 1987

Let's be honest: there was only one reason why most teenage boys bought *Game Over*, and it wasn't because it was an excellently crafted game.

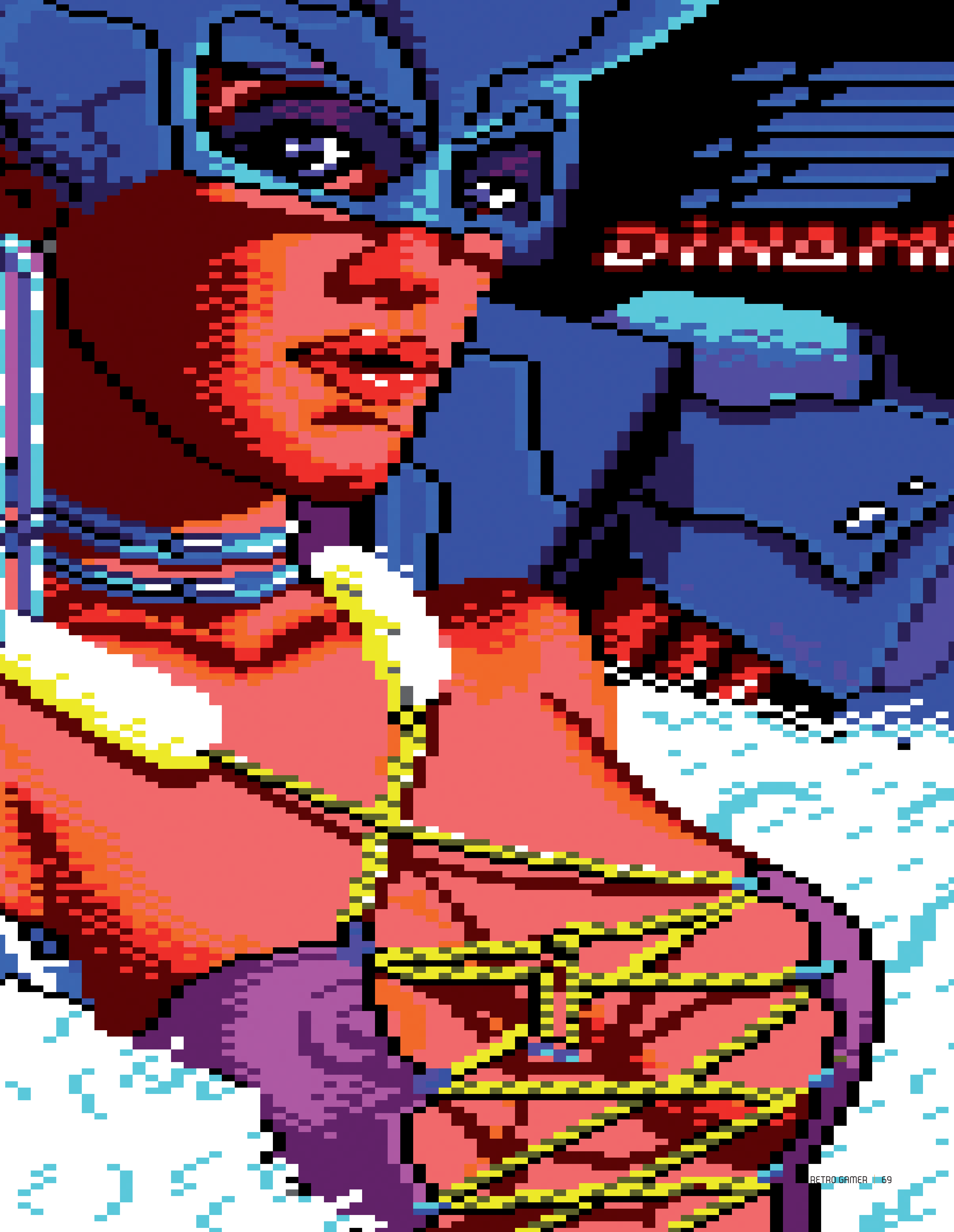
Game Over's provocative loading screen, which we've emulated across these pages in all its nipple-showing glory, and intensive ad campaign were the real reasons why teenagers throughout the UK were looking forward to Spanish developer Dinamic Software's new game. The hard-as-nails gameplay had nothing to do with it.

Annoyingly, despite featuring some truly astonishing visuals – providing, of course, that you were lucky enough to own the superior Amstrad or Spectrum versions – *Game Over* was simply too punishing for its own good. The first stage may have consisted of just 20 screens, but they were 20 of the most gruelling screens that you were ever likely to come across in a game. Constantly assaulting the player from both sides of the screen with a never-ending swarm of enemies, *Game Over* was a game of attrition, and it was often sheer bloody-mindedness that enabled you to make any sort of progression in it.

Even though playing *Game Over* was a more painful proposition than walking barefoot over a floor of razor blades, the game's impressive aesthetic fidelity was so outstanding that you'd stubbornly persevere, just to see what other visual treats it could offer. Sprites were exceptionally well-detailed and animated, with a gigantic, terrifying boss that was found halfway through the first level. While Spectrum and Amstrad owners were flicking through each screen, the trade-off was the exceedingly quick pace that Dinamic's game churned out. Indeed, in many respects, *Game Over* felt like an early console title, albeit one with dodgy collision detection, spongy controls, and a joypad-destroying difficulty level.

Despite its flaws, I still retain a soft spot for *Game Over*, mainly because it felt like such an achievement when I did finally clear those first 20 stages after many hours of painfully slow progress. Having said that, aside from the purpose of this retrospective, it's a title that I never plan to return to again. *





DESERT • ISLAND • DISKS

Steve Bristow…

What cherished games would you take to the island?

Computer Space, Pong and Tank… Steve Bristow had his hand in some groundbreaking games and was a key part of the early Atari success story. Paul Drury goes back to the Seventies…

"It was the summer of '71 and I was working at Ampex, while I was studying at the University of California at Berkley," begins Steve Bristow, who was born and still lives in the Golden State. "I noticed I was building something that definitely didn't look like Ampex stuff. Turned out to be circuitry for *Computer Space*!"

Many of us stacked shelves or pulled pints to pay our way through university, but Steve must be the only one whose summer job involved creating the first ever arcade machine. Of course, it helped that his supervisors were Nolan Bushnell and Ted Dabney, who would set up Atari the following year and kick-start the whole industry.

"Nolan's bosses knew he was working on something," Steve adds. "He presented it to them, saying, 'Hey, I've got this great thing,' but they said, 'Nah, we're not interested. If you want to do that, do it on your own.' Basically, Ampex turned down videogames."

So Nolan moved on to Nutting Associates, where his vision became beautiful, fibreglass reality. Steve joined him there in March 1972 and was responsible for fixing any faulty boards destined for those elegant *Computer Space* cabinets. When Nolan left, after disagreeing with Bill Nutting over the company's direction, Steve stepped up to VP of engineering and started a two-player project, in more ways than one.

"I got married that July and my wife constructed the prototype wire-wrap for a two-player version of *Computer Space*. She and I took the train to Chicago for the AMOA show that year where Nutting exhibited it. I thought it was pretty neat, but who knew how big videogames would be?"

While *Computer Space* can claim to be the first, it was, of course, *Pong* that introduced arcade machines to the masses. Once Steve had finished his degree, he went straight to work for his old mentor Nolan Bushnell, whose new company Atari was coining it in thanks to its ubiquitous yellow cabinet. Steve's first project was *Pong Doubles*, which brought two extra paddles into play. A simple enough task, you might think, but these really were the early days.

"There was no code and no microprocessor," chuckles Steve. "It was a case of, 'Here's the circuit for *Pong* and now we want it for four players. You look at the circuitry, add some blocks on the schematic, build it up and try it out. And hope that it works!'"

The hulking *Pong Doubles* did indeed work, and, not afraid to get his hands dirty, Bristow continued to fiddle with those basic circuits to produce *Quadrapong*, the spiritual antecedent to *Warlords*, and the volleyball-inspired *Rebound*. The latter bears a striking resemblance to *Spike*, released by Sunnyvale neighbour Kee Games, which turns out not to be a coincidence…

"The way the industry worked back then was that each town had, say for pinball, a Bally distributor, a Williams distributor, one for Chicago Coin and they all had exclusive deals," explains Steve. "It was the same for videogames. Atari was selling products but they were only going through one channel in major areas, so Nolan got a neighbour, a smart computer guy called Joe Keenan, to set up a 'competitor'."

It was a clever ruse, designed to covertly increase sales avenues. Steve became the VP of engineering for Kee Games, which despite being set up with Atari money and sharing its manufacturing facility and R&D group, did build up its own engineering personnel and assembled and shipped its own games. "To the outside world, Atari and Kee Games were in competition, but internally, there was a rivalry too," notes Steve. "For example, Atari produced their two-player driving game, *Gran Trak 10*, and we did our version, *Twin Racer*. It was exactly the same game inside! Our cabinet was uglier but easier to drive and was more popular, much to Atari's chagrin."

This friendly one-upmanship produced many first steps along now well-trodden gaming paths. At the AMOA trade show in 1974, the secret couple showcased *Touch Me*, which inspired *Simon* (see boxout); a prototype pinball machine that was the first to contain a microprocessor; the landmark lightgun game *Qwak*; and *Indy 800*, an eight-player

Trivia

The first coding Steve ever did was in the mid-Sixties on the brilliantly titled Wang programmable calculator at his high school.



Nintendo's Duck Hunt owes a debt to Qwak from 1974



“There’s no reason in hell why Atari couldn’t be as big as Nintendo is now”

Steve Bristow on how it could have been…

FAMOUS FOR
Atari games and consoles

FIRST JOB
TV repairman

CURRENT JOB
Start-up entrepreneur and grandparent

FAVOURITE FILM
Kelly’s Heroes

FAVOURITE ALBUM
Pet Sounds
The Beach Boys

FIRST COMPUTER
Atari 800

BEST GAMING ACHIEVEMENT
Herding cats to make games

BESTSELLING PRODUCT
The VCS console

BEST HOLIDAY
My wife and I love England! Hertfordshire, London, York and the very underrated city of Lincoln. They have the Magna Carta!

WHO YOU WANT TO BE STRANDED WITH
I can only answer my wife, my best part since 1967. If I answered anything else I’d be dead. Besides, it’s true.

145235-46746546546546

SEX
M

NAME
Steve Bristow

DATE OF BIRTH
31 DEC 1949

PLACE OF BIRTH
California

BIOGRAPHY
Steve worked on the granddaddy of all arcade machines, Computer Space, before joining Atari as one of its first employees. He stayed with it until 1984, working on such projects as Tank, the VCS and the Atari home computers.

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Timeline

1971

1973

1973

1974

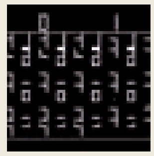
COMPUTER SPACE
■ **YEAR:** 1971
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
Steve not only worked on the board for the first ever arcade game, but he and his wife developed the two-player version.



PONG DOUBLES
■ **YEAR:** 1973
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
Steve's first project for Atari was to add another pair of paddles to the company's seminal hit. Naturally, it was a huge success.



GOTCHA
■ **YEAR:** 1973
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
One of the earliest maze games and still the only arcade cabinet to boast breasts as controllers. Pity that that never caught on…



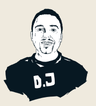
TANK
■ **YEAR:** 1974
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
The game that saved Atari, and it also inspired the VCS cartridge *Combat*, responsible for much of the console's early popularity.



The Team On Bristow

Here's what **Retro Gamer** has to say about Steve's games…



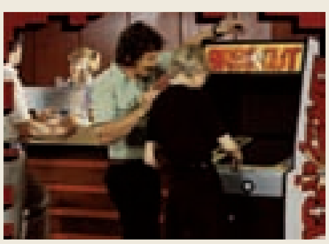


Darran Jones
He may not be as well-known as his peers, but Steve Bristow's impact on the games industry remains just as important. I'm certainly not old enough to have played the original *Computer Space*, but I have played the many games it inspired and am also a fan of the excellent *Lunar Lander*. An incredibly important individual who helped shape Atari.





Paul Drury
In the days when games had to be wrought out of cold circuitry, Steve helped create some great little titles that would lay the foundations for so many gaming genres. His role in bringing the VCS and the Atari computers to market means his contribution to both the home console and arcade sectors is astonishing.





Stuart Hunt
With input into the creation and refinement of history's inaugural videogames, as well as saving Atari's bacon in the Seventies with the highly successful *Computer Space* variant *Tank*, Steve played an important role in the establishment and preservation of the videogame industry, something that very few people can brag.

driving game. You were certainly pioneering some new genres there, Steve…

"Yeah, we probably were," he replies, modestly. "I remember with *Indy 800*, it wouldn't fit through the doors, so we had to dismantle the whole game, pass it through this single door and reassemble it inside the show. And with *Qwak*, it was the first time we'd really put a weapon in someone's hands. The question was could they break the cabinet? I went to an engineering review and said, 'Let's give it a try!' I did my best to punch through the Plexiglass with the gun and it survived. Then I tried to break the screen with my foot. That was fun…"

While they weren't breaking glass, Atari and Kee Games were definitely breaking new ground with some left-field thinking. Who before or since has opted for a control setup modelled on a pair of breasts? "The idea of putting those 'round-ish' controllers was George Faraco's," chuckles Steve, recalling the distinctive pink mouldings that encased the joysticks on 1973's *Gotcha*. "By that time, we actually had a couple of designers, artistic types. We all looked at it and said, 'Ooooookay!' That was one of George's more memorable ideas. Creating a maze game was a challenge when you still didn't have a microprocessor. One circuit could create a checkerboard pattern and another could effectively 'filter' that information to give you what showed up on screen. Everything was being done in real-time without a computer, which is perhaps hard for people to understand."

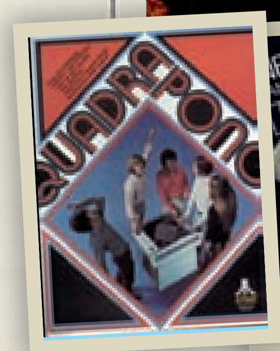
What is also difficult to comprehend is that despite all this innovative work, by the middle of 1974 Atari was in serious trouble. *Pong* had stopped selling, the company was reputedly $500,000 in debt, and staff were being laid off. It desperately needed a hit to survive and who should deliver it but its supposed competitor.

"The thinking behind *Tank* was that *Computer Space* had a lot of good things, like the ability to turn, move and shoot, but people were confused by Nolan simulating real space, so if you thrust you just kept going," Steve explains. "I said maybe we could do *Computer Space* but with something that's not so hard to drive. I had experience of driving caterpillar tractors in my youth, so I thought, 'Okay, let's have two controllers – one for each track – and a gun… and you have *Tank*!'"

This conceptual breakthrough tied in with two other key factors. In early '74, Steve had been working on an American

> "I tried to punch through the glass with the gun. Then I tried to break the screen with my foot"
>
> *Testing arcade cabinets the old-fashioned way*









» Steve had a flying start in the games industry with the two-player version of *Computer Space*, *Quadrapong* and *Tank*.

football game, creating a prototype system that put Xs and Os on the screen, but with every object requiring a separate circuit to move, manoeuvring a whole team around the pitch proved impossible. Later that year, Steve hired a bright young Berkley graduate called Lyle Rains, passed on his prototype and game idea to the new recruit, and the boy did good.

"Lyle kicked it around and turned it into *Tank*," smiles Steve. "He used a little bit of ROM for the maze, which was a first for us. What he pulled out of pure air, which he should get more credit for, is it also used RAM. The maze was fixed but the minefield was in RAM. It was the first Atari game to do that."

Tank not only brought the company back from the brink of financial ruin, but the demand for it from distributors was so overwhelming that they forgot about their previous exclusivity deals, allowing Atari to come clean about its clandestine relationship with Kee Games. The latter became a 'wholly owned subsidiary', though its crucial role in the survival of the parent company was acknowledged when Joe Keenan was appointed president of Atari and Steve became VP of engineering. "It was a case of the minnow eating the whale," winks Steve.

With the two companies merged, Steve became part of the management team and under his guidance, Atari pushed ahead with such black and white beauties as *Super Bug* and *Sky Diver*. He also wrote the contract for one Steve Jobs to deliver *Breakout*, which dominated arcades in 1976. "I

The Atari design team in 1976. Steve is front row, middle, next to Mr Nakamura of Namco

1979

LUNAR LANDER
■ **YEAR:** 1979
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
Steve was responsible for overseeing the project that brought vector games to the Atari, this being the first of many.



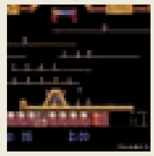
1979

ATARI 400/800
■ **YEAR:** 1979
■ **VERSION:** Home
As VP of the Consumer and Computer Group, Steve was in charge of putting Atari's home computers into production.



1991

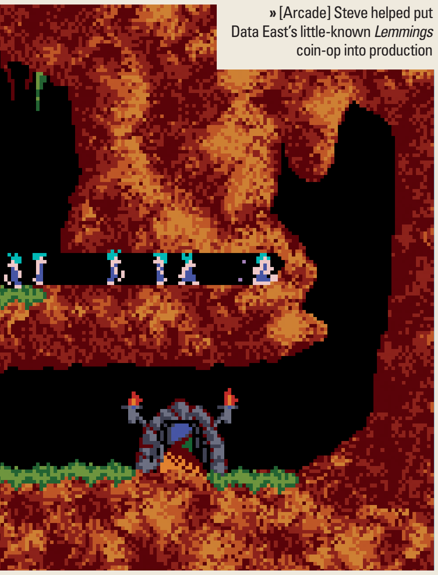
LEMMINGS COIN-OP
■ **YEAR:** 1991
■ **VERSION:** Arcade
While at Data East, Steve helped bring *Lemmings* to the arcades. Sadly it lasted about as long as a suicidal rodent on a clifftop.



1998

RADICA BASEBALL
■ **YEAR:** 1998
■ **VERSION:** Plug and Play
The Plug and Play series, of which *Baseball* was just one, pioneered motion sensor controls a decade before the Wii appeared.





» [Arcade] Steve helped put Data East's little-known *Lemmings* coin-op into production

think Steve Wozniak did most of the 'heavy lifting' on that project but they did a good job," says Steve, knowingly. "Steve Jobs always had an appreciation of his own ability. He wasn't allowed onto the production floor because he wouldn't wear shoes, only sandals. There was a special-ness to him. Is it true he stole the parts from us to build the first Apple computer? Not to my knowledge! It was like at Ampex – there was always a stock of parts that no one kept track of. It was easier on the paperwork and hey, who knows what someone might come up with? In fact, Jobs did offer the idea that he and Wozniak had for a home computer to Nolan, but he said no. Nolan turned down Apple, Ampex turned down videogames… No one's perfect."

But then Atari had its own ideas for new hardware. Having created home versions of *Pong* and several other of its arcade hits, the Atari R&D group proposed a console based around a dedicated chip that could be controlled by a microprocessor, allowing much greater flexibility. The all-conquering Atari VCS console was born, which, of course, came bundled with the ubiquitous *Combat* cartridge.

"The original rule on the chip design was 'can it play *Tank*, *Pong* and a driving game?'" Steve notes. "We had three big hits and that was how we were going to sell this new console!"

And that wood-grained wonder would go on to sell 30 million units over the next decade, creating the whole home videogame industry in the process and making Atari the fastest-growing company in American history. Steve had many different roles during Atari's golden years. He headed up the coin-op division until 1979, overseeing the development of the vector monitor, before becoming VP of the Consumer and Computer Group, where he helped put Atari's home computer range into production. "Yeah, it was exciting getting into home computers," nods Steve, "but we were Atari and we always knew people wanted to play games. Our computers weren't text terminals. They were always orientated towards having gaming facilities – good display capabilities and good sounds."

Games were what Atari was built on, but with the cash flooding in, the people that were producing those million-selling VCS cartridges were getting restless. The philosophy of the company had changed. After Warner Bros took control, Nolan left and Joe Keenan was replaced by the corporately minded Ray Kassar. "He was getting chauffeured down from San Francisco every day in his Rolls Royce and now we had an executive dining room," notes Steve, indicating the shift in culture. "The mindset changed after Kassar arrived. The people he brought in didn't understand the technology and weren't able to accept risk. It became all about marketing."

The final straw for Steve came in 1983, when he pitched the Super Stella project to his superiors. The console was to be a replacement for the VCS and have the power of the Atari home computers but with backwards compatibility, to capitalise on the huge range of cartridges already available. "It was shot down for political reasons and never got to see the light of day," says

Touch Me, I'm Sick of Simon

Even if you haven't read the Making of *Simon* piece in **RG73**, you should be able to recognise the similarity between Atari's *Touch Me*, which required you to copy a pattern of lights and sounds, and Ralph Baer's iconic handheld.

"I only found out years later that Ralph had been to that AMOA show in 1974 and seen *Touch Me* and based *Simon* on it," says Steve. "I knew we had invented it but I didn't know he had a patent on something we had in production. We just hadn't filed the patents and he had. When they started selling *Simon*, I was in the Toy and Game division at Atari, so we thought we could do it on a calculator and we sold 750,000. We got a letter from MB threatening to shut us down and I sent a reply back personally to their lawyer with the 1974 *Touch Me* brochure saying, 'No, I think we did this first.' You know what? They never replied."



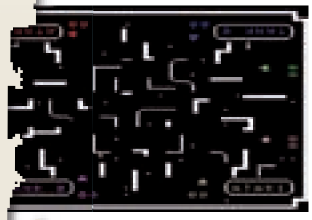
Touche, Simon. Here's Touch Me



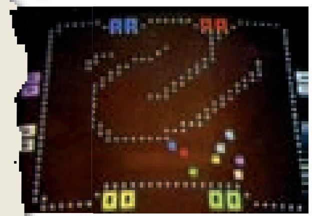


Bristow on Bristow

We asked Steve to pick his three favourite games from his extensive back catalogue



■ **TANK**
"It was about doing *Computer Space* right. It was based around what people found difficult and what confused them with that game and what they enjoyed about it. It was our attempt to address the shortcomings. It was really successful so it turned out we must have been right!"



■ **INDY 800**
"There had been two-player games before, but this had eight players competing. Of course it was standalone, but the dynamics of watching people play, where there was competition between more than you and the next guy… It was the invention of multiplayer games."



■ **RADICA PLUG AND PLAY**
"The Plug and Play range was like the anti-console. You don't have to remember some weird combination of buttons. No, you're really holding a fishing rod or swinging a paddle. My favourite? Either *Table Tennis* or *Baseball*."

ISLAND DESERT DISKS

Readers' Questions

Merman: Did you ever have an idea for a game that was rejected by everyone but you felt certain would be a hit?
Yeah, but you keep trying. Back at Nutting Associates, this idea for *Missile Radar* was described to me, where you were shooting down missiles. At Atari, I kept proposing it and proposing it and it kept getting rejected, until eventually it turned into *Missile Command*. It can take a while, but that shows perseverance can pay off.

Northway: What happened to all those research projects at Atari?
I'm a pack rat. I've got prototypes of a programmable cartridge LCD game system that didn't see the light of day sitting here. We had a whole dot matrix LCD system that was ready to go but it was, 'Oh, let's build a whole lot more VCSs,' so it never went into production. Then there was the Atari holographic videogame system, which had a holographic image over a 3D background, which never went into production. Things happen…

Mayhem: Did you have any involvement with the creation of *Combat* for the Atari VCS?
I didn't have any hands-on involvement but we knew we needed a version of *Tank* for it and *Combat* was like a compilation. We also wanted a version of *Pong* and a driving game, which is why it came with paddles!

NonShinyGoose: Did you get any female feedback about the *Gotcha* arcade game? Did anybody brand it as sexist?
One-word answer: No.

Merman: Did you prefer designing and making games to being in management of a software company?
That's a harder question. You just can't do everything yourself. Producing a good product is the first goal and you can only do so much on your own. There's pleasure in both making something happen and something you personally produce.

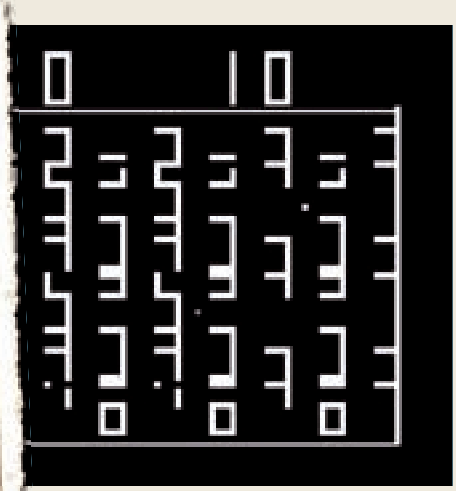
Timothy Lumsden: If you could erase any of your games from videogaming history, which one would it be?
I don't think I'd erase any Atari games. I would have erased *Death Race* by Exidy, where you run people over and little crosses appear. I'd prefer it for the industry if that was erased.

VinnyM: During your time in the games industry, what have been your highest and lowest points?
Every time I see something I worked on in an arcade or store, that's a high. A major low was when Super Stella was killed by management bean counters. You knew you had the good stuff but it didn't proceed and you then see a company you worked for failing and a lot of people you know out of work. There's no reason in hell to my mind why Atari couldn't be as big as Nintendo is now.

The Master: Who is your favourite Doctor Who?
Tom Baker. Although David Tennant did a fair job.

The first showing of Indy 800 in November 1974





» [Arcade] *Gotcha*: Come on, chase me…

Steve, sadly. "There was a risk it might possibly make the computer division less attractive and it was easier for the bean counters to just keep churning out more VCS consoles. I went to Nintendo before they came out with the NES and the product they were pitching to us wasn't as good as what we had. I've probably got a little bile over this…"

Many things were leaving a bad taste in his mouth. Dissension over compensation led to some programmers splitting from Atari to form Activision, which Steve admits left him feeling "a little betrayed". A series of disastrous management decisions and some disappointing high-profile titles – *Pac-Man* and *ET*, anyone? – meant that the once-great company was haemorrhaging money. "It was like I was in the engine room of the Titanic and the water was coming up. I wanted off the boat!"

So in 1984, just months before Atari imploded, Steve left the company, which he'd seen grow from garage operation to multinational concern. After stints working in telephone R&D and a brief return to Ampex, Steve joined Data East, where he oversaw production of *Whac-A-Mole* clone *Wacky Gator* and a little-known coin-op version of the British-born *Lemmings*.

"I came over to Liverpool to visit Psygnosis," recalls Steve when asked about this fairly obscure production. "They were smart guys. Joe Keenan and Gene Lipkin were in charge of our sales and marketing and *Lemmings* was what people were playing after hours… and during them too! We thought, 'Hey that's pretty addictive. We can make a coin-op out of that,' but it turned out there were some issues. You got really into it, but you didn't want to put money in! It was a good translation but it didn't sell well."

> "It was exciting getting into home computers but Atari always knew that people wanted to play games"

Steve knows that we didn't get them for our homework

Trivia

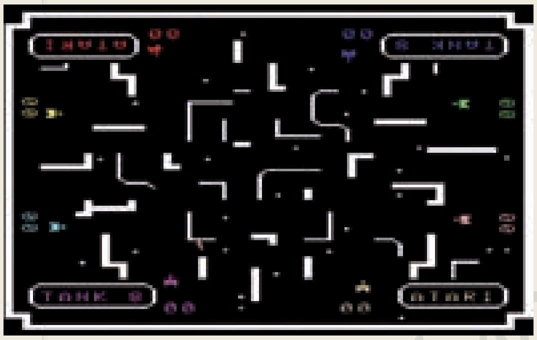
Steve and his team were so pleased with the job that Lyle Rains had done with *Tank* that they gold-plated one set of boards and presented it to him as a thank you.

If you know of the location of any of the "few hundred" *Lemmings* cabs that Data East produced in 1991, **Retro Gamer** would love to hear from you. Steve stayed in the industry with Radica, where he worked on everything from golf simulators to *Barbie* dance games. Perhaps the most significant of the projects he was involved in was the 'Plug and Play' range, which had the clever idea of putting motion-sensors into controllers and allowing you to simulate various sporting activities by pretending you were swinging a bat or casting a fishing rod. Hang on, that reminds us of something…

"I don't want this to sound like sour grapes, but Nintendo gets all the hype for inventing motion controls and it turns out we did that at Radica long before the Wii," says a rueful Steve. "Some people just have bigger press and marketing budgets…"

Undeterred, Steve is still plugging away with new technology and is currently involved in various start-up ventures, including one producing mobile phone games. We wonder whether, after almost four decades in the industry, he now knows how to get the best from game makers? "You get people to work harder if you give them freedom," states Steve. "Like at Atari, we put on free doughnuts and people showed up early and worked late without being pressurised. Sometimes you would smell the odour of some organic materials burning, the dress code was loose, and no one was watching the clock, but that usually meant people worked longer!"

Ah, the good old days…



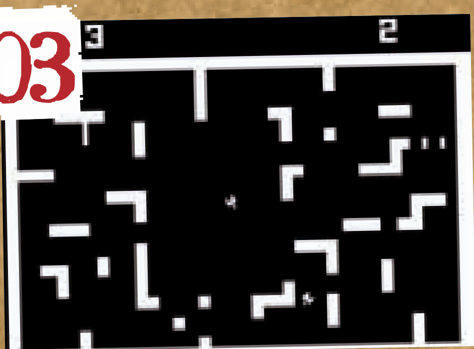
» [Arcade] The huge success of the original *Tank* led to this eight-player version.

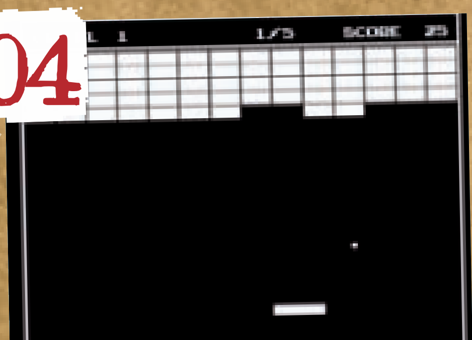
Steve Bristow's
Desert Island Disks

The games that Steve just couldn't live without and why he loves them

01


02


03


04


05


06


07


08


01 Superman PINBALL
Pinball machines are just good and I would have to have one on my island. There are such a number I like. If I had to choose just one, I'd take Atari's last pinball machine, *Superman*. It was the culmination of Atari's efforts in pinball and it was just a really good machine.

02 Asteroids ARCADE
The absolute best vector game ever built. Yes, I saw it in development. I was there, I knew it was good and it was… and it sold like hell! *Asteroids* is a metaphor for life. You solve one problem and it creates other problems. The combination of your skill and random chance is a magic combination.

03 Tank ARCADE
It wasn't just a twitch game. There was strategy. It was the culmination of *Computer Space* and that first generation of computer games. No microprocessor, no computer; just two large circuit boards and a really great game.

04 Breakout ARCADE
Because one: it was fun; and two: because it provided the money to found Apple! Steve Wozniak did the design and Steve Jobs… managed Steve Wozniak! Years later, in the Nineties, I discovered that his family lived just down the lane from us. Turns out Steve Wozniak grew up less than a block from my house and I never knew.

05 Atari 2600 CONSOLE
It just has so many good cartridges. Sometimes I think that the old games that didn't depend on graphics and special effects and had to rely on gameplay are in some sense better games. I'd like to take the console… and a pile of cartridges please!

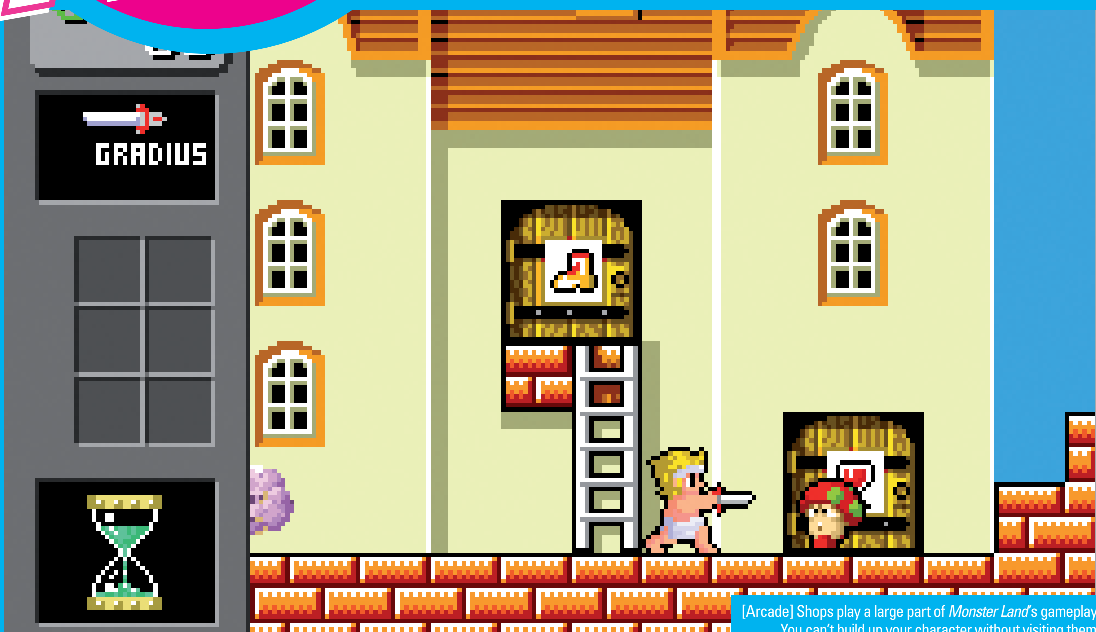
06 Hercules PINBALL
This game started as a prototype from a coin-op veteran, Ron Halliburton, who Gene Lipkin had worked with before at Allied Leisure. We took the concept on and worked with Ron to produce what is still the world record sized pinball machine. It used 110-volt solenoids to move a pool table cue ball in a pinball machine that had a full 4x8'-sized playfield. I understand that there are still *Hercules* machines collecting coins 20 years later.

07 Wacky Gator ARCADE
Just because it was fun. I wasn't involved in the original *Whac-A-Mole* but I was part of *Wacky Gator*. You can imagine labelling the figures as they're popping up as the person you'd most like to whack! There's something very cathartic about knocking the snot out of those little gators. It's therapeutic. Physical violence is better taken out on a game than real people.

08 Table Tennis ARCADE
I'd have to have something non-electronic, so a ping-pong table or a pool table. They don't need batteries; they're fundamental and you learn things. At some point on the island I'd need something that didn't rely on batteries and would work all the time. Something that didn't have a failure mode!

WHY YOU MUST PLAY…

WONDER BOY IN MONSTER LAND



[Arcade] Shops play a large part of *Monster Land*'s gameplay. You can't build up your character without visiting them.

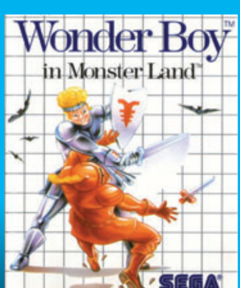


[Arcade] While the bosses are rather disappointing to look at, many of them put up a tough fight.



[Arcade] There are plenty of different items to buy on your travels. Just make sure you have the cash.

AFTER FINDING SUCCESS WITH WESTONE'S EXCELLENT WONDER BOY, SEGA QUICKLY COMMISSIONED A FOLLOW-UP. INTERESTINGLY THE END PRODUCT IS NOT AT ALL WHAT YOU'D EXPECT FROM AN ARCADE GAME…



IN THE KNOW

- » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA
- » **DEVELOPER:** WESTONE
- » **FEATURED HARDWARE:** ARCADE
- » **GENRE:** PLATFORMER/ADVENTURE
- » **RELEASED:** 1987
- » **EXPECT TO PAY:** £80+

After finding huge success with *Wonder Boy*, Sega's sequel couldn't have been more different. The fast-scrolling platforming of the 1986 original was replaced by a more languid affair with more emphasis on exploring its levels, while the prehistoric setting had been replaced with an environment more befitting of medieval times. It was a drastic change for the franchise and, if we're honest, it wasn't a good idea.

That's not to say that *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* is a poor game – it most certainly isn't – but it certainly doesn't make for a good arcade experience. Even ignoring the 1986 original, *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* just doesn't deliver any of the ingredients that you'd expect to see in a typical arcade title. Fast reflexes aren't required; the sedate pace is a world away from the hectic gameplay of scrolling fighters, shmups and most other platformers; and the RPG elements, levelling up weapons and armour, felt rather detached from the usual arcade experience as well.

It was a massive risk on Sega's part, particularly as Westone, the original creator of *Wonder Boy*, was finding success with the near-identical *Adventure Island* on the NES at the same time, and yet it remains one of the most interesting games in the convoluted franchise. Initially you'll start off with a minimal amount of clothing and very little else. Before long, however, you'll be filled in on *Monster Land*'s plot and be given a simple sword with which to set the game to rights. And so begins a new adventure that, despite being a completely different beast to the game that spawned it, nevertheless proves to be a highly entertaining jaunt.

So why should you check *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* out? Simple: it's a highly entertaining game that shows just how far you can push a franchise. It may have simplistic-looking visuals, but there's a wealth of excellent gameplay hidden in Sega's second *Wonder Boy* game. Each level, while not as linear as those found in the original, is still fairly easy to navigate, but there are so many secrets hidden in each stage that you won't rest until you've explored every last nook and cranny. Leaping up in certain places reveals hidden coins, pushing up in certain parts of the world will lead you to secret doors, while even innocuous-looking clouds can be used as platforms to new locations

WHAT MAKES IT UNIQUE



ALCOHOL
You can buy intoxicating drinks to restore health and also learn handy hints for later stages of the game.



WEAPON UPGRADES
This was the first instalment in the *Wonder Boy* series where you could constantly upgrade armour and weaponry.



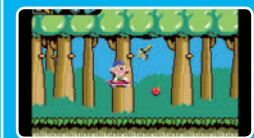
SECRETS
Coins and high-valued items are hidden all around *Monster Land*. You'll have to search hard to find them all, though.



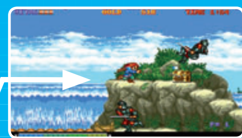
TINY BOSSES
Unlike many arcade games, *Monster Land*'s mayors are rather insignificant to look at. However, they're still quite tough to defeat.

INFLUENCES

The games that influenced and have been influenced by **Wonder Boy In Monster Land**

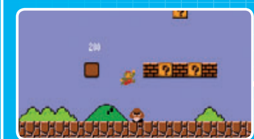


■ **WONDER BOY** (1986)
There would be no *Monster Land* without Westone's wonderfully fun original *Wonder Boy*. Simplistic gameplay, but it's fast and furious fun.



■ **WILLOW** (1989)
It may be based on a film, but *Willow*'s fantastical world is full of monsters and shops and certainly reminds us of Sega's excellent adventure.

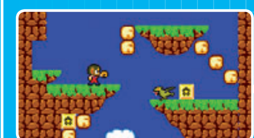




■ **SUPER MARIO BROS** (1985)
***Mario* was full of clever secrets, so we wouldn't be at all surprised if Sega 'borrowed' a few ideas from this great NES game.**



■ **WONDER BOY III: THE DRAGON'S TRAP** (1989)
Think *Monster Land* on a far larger scale. Special mention should go to the excellent animal forms.



■ **ALEX KIDD IN MIRACLE WORLD** (1986)
With its cute visuals, it's safe to say that Sega's mascot made a big impact on *Wonder Boy*'s future direction.



■ **LEGEND OF THE MYSTICAL NINJA** (1992)
The themes of *Monster Land* are here, but are enhanced by massive bosses and some great little mini-games.

> "Wonder Boy constantly gives you reasons to seek the unexpected"

or hidden treasures. As with the *Mario* games, there is a real joy from discovering the unknown, and *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* constantly gives you reasons to seek out the unexpected.

Structurally it's great as well. As we first mentioned, your little wingless cherub – well, that's what he looks like – starts off his quest with just a sword. As gold is collected, though, you'll be able to build up a fairly formidable arsenal, making your battle with the dragon that's enslaving *Monster Land* far easier. A variety of shops can be found throughout, allowing you to purchase everything from shields to armour and boots. Energy can be restored, bars can be visited and even power-ups like mini fireballs can be purchased, providing, of course, that you have the hard cash available to you. Items can also be secured by defeating certain bosses. Each stage has a mayor hidden behind a door on each stage, and while many will reward you with additional coins and a key for the level's exit, a few harbour more powerful weapons.

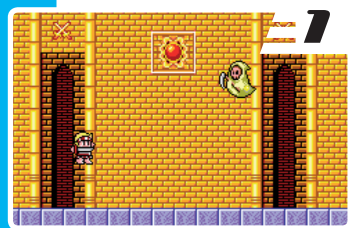
While there are a huge number of bosses to defeat, many of them are far from impressive. Although many of them boast fairly challenging attack patterns – the leaping Goblin being notably tough – they're usually quite small in stature and aren't exactly awe-inspiring or threatening to look at. The same can be said for all of *Monster Land*'s sprites, though, and the small, simplistic characters give it a primitive, if rather colourful, look.

Perhaps the biggest disappointment, however, was Sega's decision to leave in a timer that robs one of your precious hearts whenever it runs out. While it's obviously there to ensure that you keep moving, it goes against the exploration themes that otherwise work so well. It's hardly game-breaking, however, but once again highlights how *Monster Land* doesn't feel like a traditional arcade game.

Despite the huge change of direction, *Monster Land* proved popular enough to receive several conversions, the most well-known being the Master System offering, as well as a few clones, including *Bikkuriman* for the PC-Engine, *Mônica No Castelo Do Dragão* for the Brazilian Master System and *Saiyuki World* for the Famicom. Quirky and inventive, *Wonder Boy In Monster Land* is an interesting title that every gamer should experience.

THE CONVERSIONS

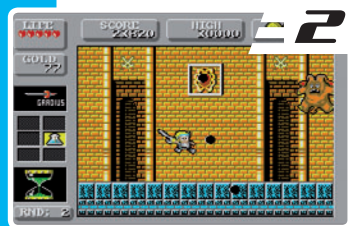
How the various versions compare



1 MASTER SYSTEM

BEST VERSION

It's not arcade perfect – it's missing quite a few tunes, for a start – but this remains our favourite version. The Master System does a great job of replicating the cute visuals of the arcade game. Ultimately, however, it's the gameplay that seems tailor-made for Sega's console.



2 AMIGA/ATARI ST

We're including these together as they're more or less identical to each other. The loading times are long and annoying and the gameplay feels rather sluggish, but these are otherwise extremely faithful to the arcade original thanks to excellent music and authentic visuals. Highly recommended.



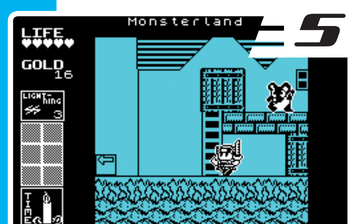
3 COMMODORE 64

Yes, the graphics are rather ugly and the jerky scrolling doesn't do it any favours, but the C64 version is easily the best 8-bit computer outing for *Wonder Boy In Monster Land*. This is due to its excellent gameplay and solid controls, which do a great job of capturing the spirit of the original game.



4 SPECTRUM

Despite the complete lack of sound, this is a surprisingly solid conversion. The visuals are large and well-detailed, while the level layout is extremely faithful to the arcade original. A very effective port that does the Spectrum proud. Little wonder it received such a strong score in *Crash* magazine.

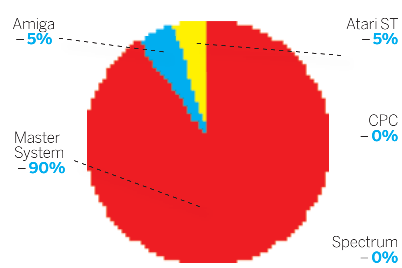


5 AMSTRAD CPC

WORST VERSION

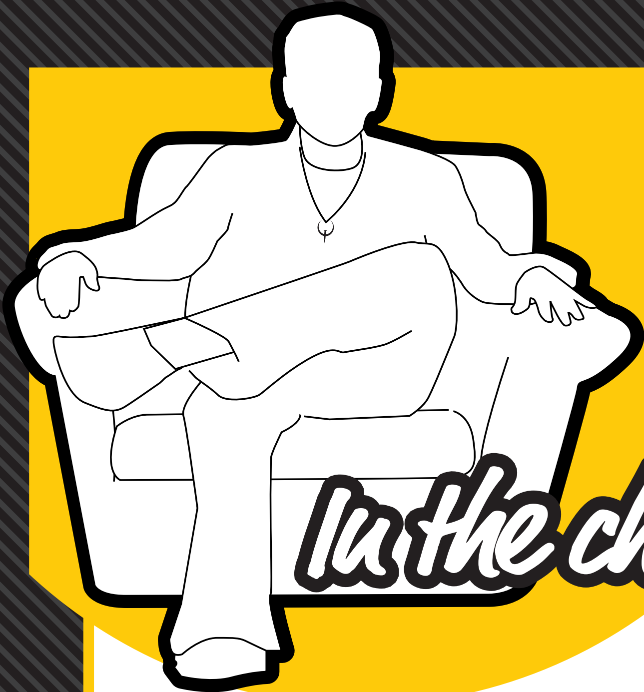
A quick and easy port from the Spectrum that does the CPC no favours. While the graphics are fairly good, the lack of colour, minimal use of sound and spongy controls make this the worst of the bunch. A very disappointing port that once again gives the Amstrad a bad name.

FORUM OPINION



I'm the only Amiga votee. Only because it's what I grew up with! In its defence, it has superior graphics plus a somewhat interesting title screen
– Cauterize

I would have loved to have said the C64 version, but overall it has to be the Master System one
– Fgasking



In the chair special with...

JOHN ROMERO

What do you do when you've designed over 100 games, invented an entire genre, and become one of the games industry's most revered and infamous figures by your early thirties? As John Romero reveals to Retro Gamer, he's still trying to figure it out. But the answer may well be online...

SOMEHOW, IT ALWAYS ends up being just John. John, alone, on the precipice of a revolution – whether in his career, or the industry as a whole. He was alone when he started programming, having no one around to notice that he'd become a coding genius. He was alone when he saw John Carmack's fateful demo and realised that it was about to change the world. And, at id Software, he was alone when he unleashed Quake and decided that it was time to leave the company he'd created. Now he's reliving those days and the moments that followed them, where he devised his next plan. And as he talks, he is alone. With the benefit of hindsight, this can only be a good thing.



RETRO GAMER: So, what was your first experience with videogames?

JOHN ROMERO: Back in the Seventies, before there were videogames, I used to go to this place in Tuscon, Arizona, called Spanky's. It was just a long room, and it was just pitch black, and there were probably about 50 pinball machines all lined up against the wall. And then they had electromagnetic games, which were, like, little fluorescent moulded cars going around inside a giant racetrack. I played them a lot, until *Space Invaders* and *Targ* came out. I thought they were so cool, because they were so different to pinball and electromagnetic games – they weren't limited by the physical shapes of things you could create. I thought, 'How many other kinds of things will there be like this?'

RG: Did you start thinking about your own game ideas then?

JR: No, I didn't. I didn't think about game design stuff then. I was just having fun.

RG: But did you ever think, 'Oh, wouldn't it be better if it did this?'

JR: No, I was just kind of accepting what I was playing. I played it to the end and I tried to master it. I just figured out what its limitations were, and tried to get really good at it.

RG: Did you?

JR: Oh yeah, I got good at whatever games I played. *Pac-Man* was probably the first game that got me thinking about game design. So many games were just 'shoot the alien', but this was so different – not only was it in colour, but it had a completely different game design, where your job is to avoid the bad guys and eat the pills. I got hooked on it – it showed me that game design was wide open.

RG: So when was your first experience of game creation?

JR: So, in the summer of '79, my brother and my friend rode up to my house on their bikes, and said they'd come from the local college. They said: 'There's games up at the college on computers, and they're free!' And for an 11-year-old kid, who doesn't have any money, free is awesome! So, I was like, 'Oh my god! Let's go!' And I got on my bike, and we rode three miles to get there. We go into this computer lab, and see all these terminals in a room. Another room had the giant HP 9000 mainframe that you couldn't go into, but we found a free terminal. The games were real basic, but I got to see what computer game design was versus arcade game design. I was excited that you could type something and make a game from it, unlike the arcade machine, which was just a big mystery box.

RG: Did you try to make your own?

JR: Yeah. I started to ask all the kids in the lab – they were all learning HP BASIC – 'What words do you type in for programming?' And then we found out that at 7am every Saturday, one of these guys had access to play *Colossal Cave Adventure* on the mainframe. So we'd bike up there at 7am every Saturday morning to watch some guy play *Adventure*. But it was cool, because you could see that this was a game you couldn't have in an arcade – arcades were just there to eat your quarters, but this game actually wanted you to take your



"Once I got that computer at home, it was pretty much the end of everything else. It's all I cared about"

> **THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS**
>
> 
>
> **TONY CROWTHER**
> (CREATOR, BLAGGER AND BOMBUZAL)
>
> "I have never met John, but I was inspired by *Doom*, and I suspect that all the developers of 3D graphics cards were as well. This was the first game I had seen with 3D graphics, and with what appeared to be a free-roaming camera in the world.
>
> "So with a friend's help, Ross Goodley, we attempted to write our own 3D engine, now knowing it was possible and what could be achieved on a PC. This led to the development of *Normality* and *Realms Of The Haunting*, my only PC projects."

time and solve it. So the first thing I did was try to write my own little adventure game on that mainframe. I couldn't save my programs on this guy's account, though, so I had to print them out on punch cards and paper tape. And after it got to about 100 punch cards, one day I was riding my bike, hit a bump, and they all fell out the back into a big puddle. That's when I knew that I was done with the mainframe. I needed my own machine.

RG: So how did you get one?

JR: Well, around that time the Apple II had come out. I was in the 9th grade. I was like, 'Now we're talking. It has colour, it makes noise, and it's not a giant mainframe.' And every day, I'd go home and tell my dad all about this stuff. After a while, I guess he figured it would be a good idea to get one at home. And once I got it, it was pretty much the end of everything else. I was just coding all the time. That's all I cared about.

RG: Did you ever recreate the game you lost in the puddle?

JR: Oh yeah. First I made a *Crazy Climber* clone, but I did do a few adventures. But I was sort of alone in what I was doing. I couldn't talk to

* FIVE TO PLAY

DOOM



» [PC] Cacodemons: shoot to kill. Think to… actually, just shoot.

DOOM IS JOHN Romero in excelsis: it's unquestionably his leanest, most perfect game design. And even now, this culture-changing game is eminently more visceral and playable than so many of the shooters it inspired. *Doom* isn't just a pop-cultural icon – the first global gaming phenomenon, the first-person shooter archetype that still defines modern design, the media target du jour for the Columbine massacre – but an example of a small developer creating something flawless, timeless, and worryingly fun. John already knew that *Doom* was going to be big before id Software released it – after all, it was riding on *Wolfenstein 3D*'s coat tails. But he never could have predicted the insanity it would trigger, the number of social lives it would claim, the thousands of games that would shamelessly duplicate it. It was the videogame equivalent of Beatlemania, and although John never paid the outside world much attention, it's *Doom* that he speaks of the fondest. Unsurprising, considering that he still plays it between *World Of Warcraft* sessions.

QUAKE



» [PC] Do you think you can 'telefrag' someone in real life?

SURE, IT WAS hampered by some serious creative differences, and yes, John has a lot of regrets about the final product, but Christ, that multiplayer… Even now, there are only a few games that can match it, and one of them was made by id itself, albeit post-John. If you've never played *Quake* online, you owe it to yourself as a gamer and a human being to give it a try. It's frenetic, noisy, gory, grimy, and for some reason always sounds like it's taking place inside a tin can – which is part of the charm, actually. If you're in the market for a pure deathmatch experience, *Quake* should always be your first port of call – the only real substitute is *Quake III*.

DANGEROUS DAVE



» [PC] You can run this on a Core i7 system with Windows 7 – or a 386, if you prefer.

ANY WAY YOU look at it, this is the one that started the id Software story, and, by extension, everything that's happened to John Romero since. Created as a *Super Mario* variant, *Dangerous Dave* is everything you'd expect from a late-Eighties platformer – jumping, secret levels, bouncy monsters – but it's had a strange sort of endurance, thanks to the way that Romero coded it. (It's hardware-agnostic, so can be played seamlessly on modern computers.) And, of course, it's an important historical document, because the Dangerous Dave character is the precursor to Commander Keen. In fact, he basically is Commander Keen.

DAIKATANA



» [PC] All right, but yes, Superfly Johnson was horrible. No way around that.

IF 'NOT AS bad as they say it is' doesn't seem like much of an endorsement, then you obviously weren't around when this came out. *Daikatana* was the Great Cyberpunk Hope for Eidos, Romero, Ion Storm, Romero's fans – hell, even the city of Dallas. But drastic technology changes, rumours, and general discontent that it wasn't the greatest game ever severely hampered *Daikatana*'s reception, and it's now commonly regarded as a stain on Romero's career. But persevere past the annoying first episode, and you'll see that it's actually good in parts, and while it's nowhere near Romero's gold standard, you could do worse than give it a second chance.

SCOUT SEARCH



» [Apple II] What horrors lurk behind these simple pixels?

ROMERO'S FIRST EVER published game. Unashamedly inspired by *Pac-Man*, *Scout Search* casts you as a scout master trying to round up all his cubs before a marauding grizzly bear arrives to eat them. It's an early glimpse into Romero's somewhat twisted sense of humour: see the instruction screen's warning about the "blood-curdling scream" as your poor charges are slowly devoured by the beast. It may not look like much up against the competition, but were it not for this game, we might not have *Doom*, *Quake*, or even *Hyperspace Delivery Boy*, and Joe Lieberman would have been a much happier man.

anyone. And then my family moved to England halfway through sophomore year, and absolutely nobody there – not even the teachers – could speak assembly language. I was in a vacuum. To make things worse, I didn't even have a computer in England; it took six months for my computer to get to there by boat, so I was hand-writing all my code on notebook paper. I was hand-assembling the assembly language into machine language, and then at school during lunchtime, I'd run to the computer room and type it in and see if it worked.

RG: Did you ever wonder at the time whether you could make a career out of it?

JR: Well, I saw the names of people on the Apple II games I was playing, and I thought, 'This is what I'm going to do, too.' My mind was made up. I was never like, 'Oh, what am I going to do with my life?'

RG: So when did you start selling your games?

JR: My first gig was with *inCider* magazine in '84, which… I should explain that when you get a game published in a magazine, you have to have a game that has a special combination of stuff to type in because people can't type in reams of assembly language; they get bored. It's just onerous to type in. Once I worked that out, I got *Scout Search* published in *inCider*. They bought it for 100 bucks.

RG: What was your favourite game that you did for a magazine?

JR: My favourite would be *Bongo's Bash*, which was published by *Nibble* magazine in '84. It was kind of like a *Pac-Man* game, but it had more to it, where you're basically a monkey versus robots. It's so funny, you know, so 1984 – monkeys versus robots! And then *Uptime* magazine licensed the game in '87 so they could put it on their disks! That one got around. Probably my first successful game.



» After a few years in the short-haired wilderness, fans will be glad to know that the legendary mane is back.

> "Sure, Quake's a really great game. But it could've really been something else"

RG: Did you start getting noticed?

JR: I didn't know! I wasn't part of the industry. I was just churning out a shitload of games and just selling 'em. I was still the lone programmer with no one to talk to.

RG: So, after freelancing for a while, you got your first industry job at Origin …

JR: Yeah, that's a pretty cool story. At the beginning of '87, I met this girl, and by May, she's pregnant. And guess what? She's keeping that kid, because she's Mormon. So I was, like, 'Okay, I've got to get a better job,' because I was working at Burger King. I got a job doing temp work, but it still wasn't enough. I said to myself, 'I need to get in the industry – I need a full-time job, making games all the time.' Funny thing is, I was such a lone programmer that the only gauge I had for how good I was were the commercial games I played.

RG: Were yours better?

JR: No, but they were close. Anyway, I did this game called *Lethal Labyrinth* in 1987, which was in double-res. And not many games on the Apple II were, because it was hard to do. And I went to the big Applefest show in San Francisco, and they had lines of tables just stacked up with *Nibble* magazines, with my game on the cover. I went straight to the *Uptime* booth, and the publisher asked if I wanted a job. Then I went over to the Softdisk booth, and they offered me a job, too! But I really wanted to work at Origin. I was an *Ultima* fanatic. So I walked over to the Origin booth, and they had a bunch of computers demoing *Ultima V*, and also they had one demoing *Ultima I*, which had been rewritten in assembly language. I said to myself, 'That's the computer they don't care about so much.' So I went over there, popped the disk out, put my double-res *Lethal Labyrinth* game in there, and the marketing lady comes over and goes, 'Hey, you can't do that!' I say, 'Watch.' She goes, 'Woah, double-res.' I'm like,

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



EUGENE JARVIS
(CREATOR OF ROBOTRON: 2084 AND DEFENDER)

"John Romero made the world his bitch with the *Doom*/*Quake* 3D FPS juggernaut. His secret weapon? The hair. Can't wait for his new rumoured social media deathmatch title *Assume The Position*! Will it be *Call Of Doodie Daikatana* kryptonite? Or will the Super Designer fly high on the trapeze of code love? I'm ready if you are."

*JOHN ROMERO'S SOFTOGRAPHY



- Scout Search **1984**
- Cavern Crusader **1984**
- Bongo's Bash **1984**
- Operation: Obliteration **1986**
- Lethal Labyrinth **1987**
- Zippi Zombi **1987**
- Major Mayhem **1987**
- Pyramids Of Egypt **1987**
- Jumpster **1987**
- Objectoids **1987**
- Snag! **1987**
- Krazy Kobra **1987**
- City Centurian **1988**
- Wacky Wizard **1988**
- Neptune's Nasties **1988**
- Dangerous Dave In The Deserted Pirate's Hideout **1988**
- James Clavell's Shogun **1988**
- Zappa Roids **1989**
- Magic Boxes **1989**
- Pixel Puzzler **1989**
- Zork Zero: The Revenge Of Megaboz **1989**
- Journey: The Quest Begins **1989**
- How To Weigh An Elephant **1989**
- Arthur: The Quest For Excalibur **1989**
- Treasure Dive **1989**
- Sub Stalker **1990**
- Alfredo's Stupendous Surprise **1990**
- Dinosorceror **1990**
- Same Or Different **1990**
- Dark Designs II: Closing The Gate **1990**
- Double Dangerous Dave **1990**
- Catacomb **1990**
- Commander Keen: Marooned On Mars **1990**
- Commander Keen 2: The Earth Explodes **1990**
- Commander Keen 3: Keen Must Die! **1990**
- Shadow Knights **1990**
- Pixel Puzzler **1990**



*NUMBER CRUNCHING

33 is the number of games that Romero made before getting one published

73K was the size of Romero's first hit, Dangerous Dave

2 was the number of texture-mapped 3D games id made before Wolfenstein

100 was the approximate number of punch-cards Romero had for his first ever game. All were ruined in a bike accident

4,000 was the number of orders that Apogee received for Wolfenstein in its first month

6 months is how long it took to make Wolfenstein 3D, as compared to the **12** that it took to make Doom, and the **18** it took to make Quake, which wasn't very much compared to the **3** years that Daikatana was in development

5 is the number of years that John Romero's been keeping us in the dark about his new MMO, which is actually pretty cruel

'Yeah.' And she's like, 'Can I have your information?' 'Yeah,' I said. 'Can I have yours?'

RG: Did she call you back?

JR: No, so I called her. And I called her, and I called her. And she finally handed me off to a manager there. He said: 'We don't have a spot yet, but we have one coming soon for the Commodore 64.' I was like, 'I don't care what machine it's on. I can do it.'

RG: How long did you stay there?

JR: I got there in November '87, so I was there for eight months. I loved it there, though. They got me doing this port of *2400 AD*, but after the Apple II version sold poorly, they sent me over to *Space Rogue*, Paul [Neurath]'s game. And while I was there, my boss asked me if I wanted to start a company with him. I said: 'If you can guarantee I'll be making the same amount of money, then hell yeah.' He did, and we founded Inside Out Software. But after a while, I knew Inside Out couldn't afford to have me around, so I left. I'd heard Jay Wilbur, my friend from *Uptime*, had gone to work at Softdisk…

RG: Did you follow immediately?

JR: Yeah. I said to Jay, 'That's awesome. What's the name of Softdisk's president?' He told me it was Al Vekovius, so I just called him up, said: 'Hey, my name's John Romero, and I'm a game programmer.' And he was like, 'Oh, man, I've heard about you! I want to fly you down immediately.'

RG: What did you start doing at Softdisk?

JR: Al knew I came from Origin, and he wanted to make games. And sell them. So he let me put together what we called the 'special projects' division. I started helping the PC department with ports, and then their other stuff, and did that for a year. By 1990, I was so burned out. I said: 'Al, look, I came here to make games. If I can't do that, I'm just going to go to LucasArts.' And Al was like, 'Woah, okay, don't leave! Let's work this out.' So I said: 'I want my own division, and I don't want to do games in a month. I need two months.' Two months! Seemed huge at the time.

RG: So it was just you in the new games division?

JR: No, I got my friend Lane Roathe from the Apple II division to come over and be the managing editor of our game disk. But I couldn't count on him to program games. Up until that point, I'd always been a lone programmer, but everything was turning into team efforts.

> **THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS**
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> 
>
> **IMRE JELE**
> (PROJECT DIRECTOR BLITZ GAMES STUDIOS' VOLATILE GAMES)
>
> "It's hard to talk about Romero without mentioning how he did not, in fact, make us his bitch with *Daikatana*. At the same time it would be unfair and more importantly foolish not to recognise how the work he did with John Carmack and Todd Hollenshead shaped the history of videogames. Through the work of id Software and the developers following their steps, they shaped technology, design, the whole of gaming forever. One can only hope that he can reproduce his impact with his latest endeavours."

> "Some dude in a strip club said: 'Remember me? I cleaned up the pixels!' I was like, 'Dude, we're in a strip club!'"

RG: How did you go about finding the right guy?

JR: Well, on the game disk there was this game called *Tennis*, by John Carmack. And that tennis game had really smooth animation – I had a really good eye for code; I could see how something was coded just by looking at the game. I thought, 'That guy's



» Romero's upcoming project will be his first game in five years.



» [PC] If Spinal Tap were talking about *Doom II* they'd no doubt say "it goes up to 11".

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



DAVID PERRY
(CEO, GAIKAI)

"John has been a good friend over the years, always full of passion for the industry. Last time we met we were in Korea looking at a game together. He explained why it wouldn't work, and he turned out to be dead on.

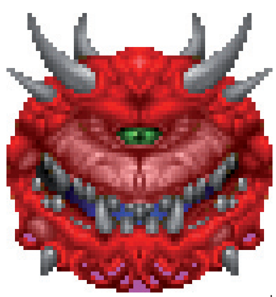
"He's a real veteran in the industry, has worked on really high-profile stuff, and I'm always interested to see what he creates next."

a good programmer.' I mentioned him to the guys in the Apple II department, saying, 'I want to interview that guy, and get him to work in my department.' They were like, 'Don't even waste your time; we've already tried hiring him twice.' And I was like, 'Yeah, but this is me hiring him.'

RG: How did the interview go?

JR: We all had dinner together – John, Lane and me. John could tell we knew everything about these computers. He'd done something really cool, actually: he'd sold a game called *Dark Designs* for the Apple II to Softdisk. It was worth 400 bucks, but he discovered that if he did it for the PC, it was worth 800. He didn't know the PC, but he told them, 'All right, I'll put it on the PC.' So he rented a PC for one week, and it was done. He learned the PC and finished the game in one week. We were, like, 'This guy is a brainiac,' and he was excited, too, that we knew our stuff. The first thing I got John to do was a game called *Catacombs* on the Apple II.

RG: *Catacombs* being the precursor to *Catacomb 3D*, id's second proto-FPS?



JR: Yeah. What happened was Al had taken a little too long in getting the department together, and he said: 'This new disk has to blow people away. We need to put two games on it, and I need it in a month.' The exact reverse of what I wanted! But we did some ports. John ported *Catacombs* to the PC – said he was going to do it in CGA mode. And I said: 'Okay, there's a game I wrote in '88 called *Dangerous Dave*, and I'm going to port that. But I'll do it in CGA, EGA and VGA!' So we were competitive.

RG: *Dangerous Dave* ended up being quite successful for Softdisk, didn't it?

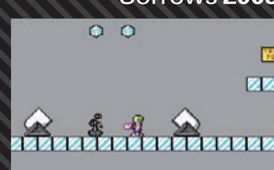
JR: Oh, yeah, that game made it all over the place. It was so small. Ten levels, three different graphic modes – I programmed it all into one executable, and then I compressed the executable. 73K on a 360K disk. That was just awesome. And because there was no hardware interfacing – it just used the PC speaker for sound – it still runs today on any version of Windows. And it made its way all around the world – kids in India still love it! I get letters from them.

RG: So the games division was doing really well, but pretty soon after that you left to form id Software. Why?

JR: Well, so much happened in those few months. The department started, we were working day and night on our games. And I was receiving these fan letters in the mail, and they were all on this yellow paper with blue horizontal lines. All from different people, though. They were all saying how great *Pyramids Of Egypt* was. Each time I got one I'd put it up on the wall. I wasn't looking at the address; I was just excited to have fans. And then I was reading a PC games magazine, and they had contact information for Scott Miller at Apogee. I saw the address, and I was, like, 'Wait a minute…' All of them

✱ JOHN ROMERO'S SOFTOGRAPHY [CONTINUED]

Dangerous Dave In The Haunted Mansion **1991**
Slordax: The Unknown Enemy **1991**
Xenopods **1991**
Paganitzu **1991**
Rescue Rover **1991**
Hovertank One **1991**
Rescue Rover II **1991**
Catacomb II **1991**
Commander Keen 4: Secret Of The Oracle **1991**
Commander Keen 5: The Armageddon Machine **1991**
Commander Keen 6: Aliens Ate My Babysitter **1991**
Paragon **1991**
Catacomb 3D **1992**
The Catacomb Abyss **1992**
Cyberchess **1992**
Commander Keen: Keen Dreams **1992**
Wolfenstein 3D **1992**
Spear Of Destiny **1992**
Terror Of The Catacombs **1993**
Street Ball **1993**
Dangerous Dave's Risky Rescue **1993**
Curse Of The Catacombs **1993**
Doom **1993**
Doom II **1994**
Heretic **1994**
Ultimate Doom **1995**
Master Levels For Doom II **1995**
Hexen **1995**
Quake **1996**
Heretic: Shadow Of The Serpent Riders **1996**
Final Doom **1996**
Daikatana **2000**
Hyperspace Delivery Boy! **2001**
Dig It! **2003**
Congo Cube **2003**
Jewels & Jim **2003**
Red Faction **2003**
Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows **2005**



THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



GARY BRACY

(DEVELOPMENT DIRECTOR, OCEAN SOFTWARE)

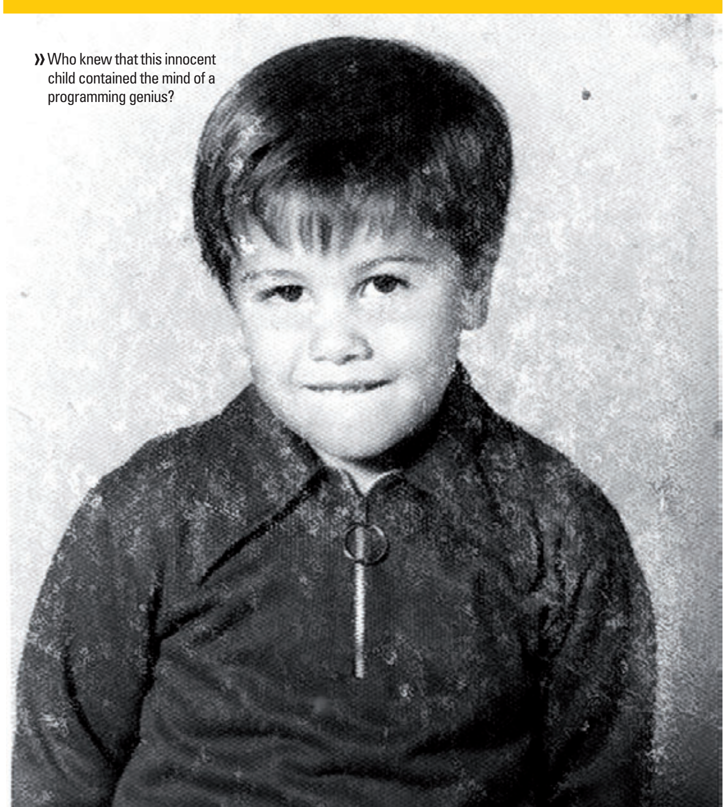
"*Doom* was an extraordinary benchmark in computer game history. Not only did it demonstrate a quantum leap forward in 3D graphics but it was the first game I remember that instilled a genuine sense of terror as you didn't know what was going to be around the next corner! So, visually and emotionally, *Doom* should be recognised as a benchmark in gaming. Of course, John's collaboration with John Carmack and his other *Doom* colleagues served as an inspiration to thousands of would-be game developers, and their legacy is one that they can be enormously proud of."

were from this guy! One of them said: 'Please write back to me, I'm, like, 65 years old.' I wrote this letter to him saying how mad I was, but Scott was like, 'I don't give a shit. I smell money.' And he said to me, 'Listen, you can make a lot of money with this thing. Can you make a version of *Pyramids Of Egypt* for me, but with all new levels, and we can break it up into a shareware trilogy?' And I said to him: 'Dude, that game is garbage compared to the stuff we're making right now.'

RG: Which was?

JR: *Slordax*, a vertical-scrolling game. I sent him a demo of that, and he was like, 'Oh my god! Can you do something like that?' At the same time, Carmack was learning how to keep on moving the screen down in vertical scrolling. And he was also playing around with the horizontal panning register, which was really hard. I'd seen everything on the PC at that time, and there was nothing that smooth-scrolled horizontally, like *Super Mario*. And one night, at, like, ten or eleven o'clock, Tom Hall came over from the Apple II department to talk to John. I'd gone home, but I'd been playing *Super Mario Bros 3* on the Nintendo, and the first level was sitting there. John showed Tom that he'd got the horizontal scrolling working now, and Tom suggested he just duplicate the first level of the *Mario* game. So for the next seven hours, he did that. For the player character, he used Dangerous Dave. He put it on a disk, called it '*Dangerous Dave In Copyright Infringement*', and when I saw this disk on my keyboard the next morning and put it in, I was just blown away. We had the power of Nintendo. When Tom and John came in, I said: 'Dude, I'm serious, that is the coolest thing I've ever seen, and we are out of here. This is done.'

> "John copied a level of Mario and called it 'Dangerous Dave In Copyright Infringement'"



» Who knew that this innocent child contained the mind of a programming genius?

RG: Just like that?

JR: Yeah, and then Scott gets back and says, '*Slordax* is so awesome! Can you do that for us?' And I'm, like, 'Dude, that is garbage compared to what we've got now.'

RG: Did you show him *Dangerous Dave* then?

JR: Yeah, I told him we could make a *Mario* game, but we'd need $2,000 to show he's serious. He said it wasn't a problem, but he needed a paragraph describing what the game was. So Tom wrote up this paragraph about a kid who saves the universe, and calls it *Commander Keen*. Scott loved it. We got our 2,000 bucks. So when we finished our Softdisk work each day, we worked on *Commander Keen* until midnight or two in the morning. And on January 15 of 1991, we had a 35 per cent royalty with Apogee, and Scott sent us the first cheque: $10,500. So it made at least $30,000 bucks the first month it came out, with no advertising.

RG: How did Al handle that?

JR: Well, he didn't know. He didn't even know *Commander Keen* had been released, because he wasn't aware of that stuff. I said: 'Look, we made some pretty kick-ass games, and it's making a lot of money, and this is what we want to do. And we can't make these games for you, because your users don't have the hardware to support EGA,' which is what *Commander Keen* used. So Al suggested he start another company just for us, and we all liked the idea. But after he had a meeting with the managing editors at Softdisk, who saw it as favouritism, he said he couldn't do it. So I told him, 'That sucks, but we have to go.' He started threatening to sue us, so we hammered out this agreement where we'd deliver a game every two months to Softdisk for as long as it takes for their new internal team to figure out the technology we wrote and make games with it.

RG: *Wolfenstein 3D* only came out a year later, though. So, at what point during all this did you start thinking about the idea of a first-person shooter?



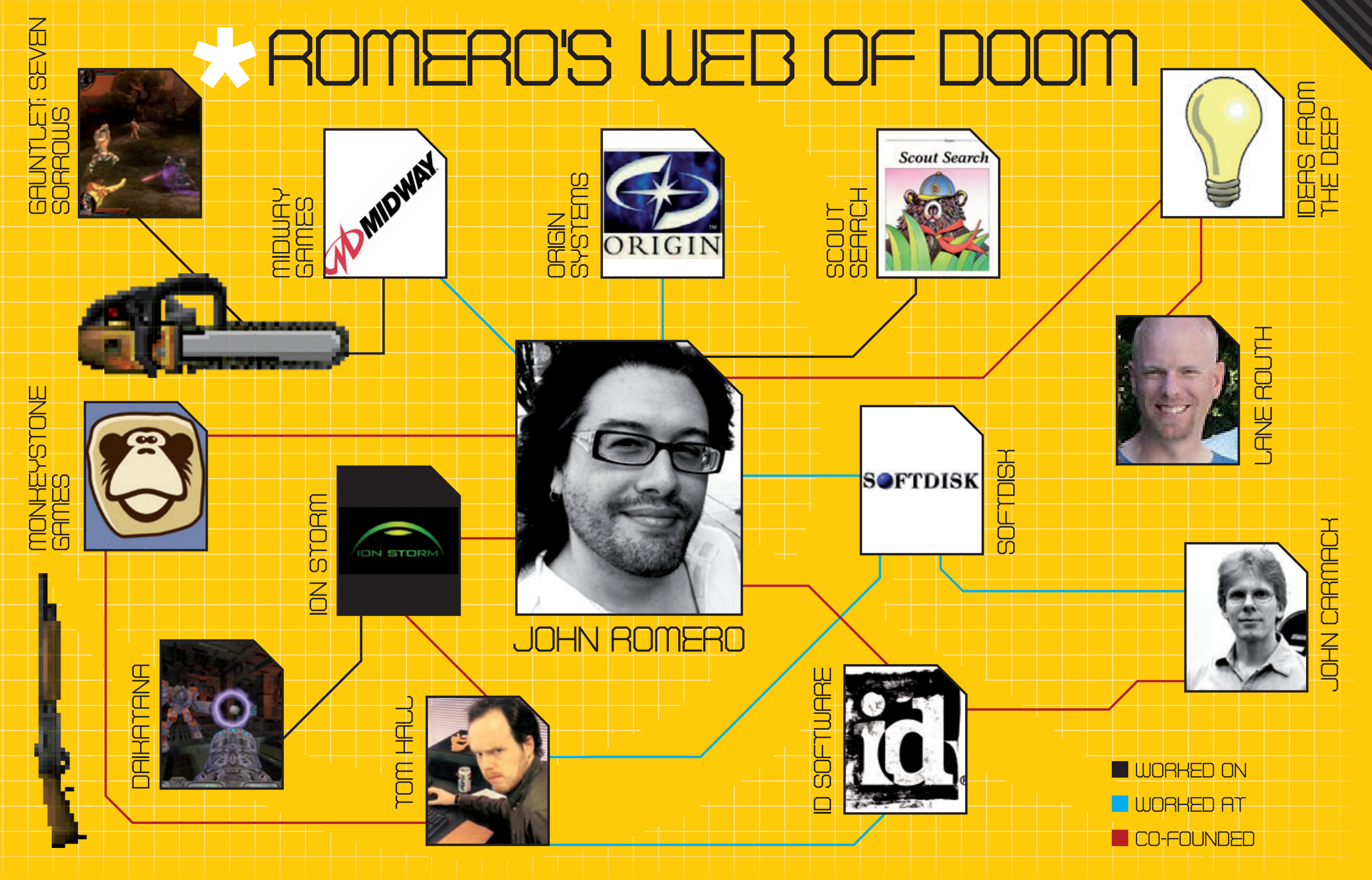
JR: Well, actually, back when I was at Softdisk, I'd kept in touch with Paul Neurath. And in the fall of 1990, he told me about this secret game his team was working on. He didn't tell me who it was for or what sort of game it was, but he did tell me about the technology: texture-mapping. He said: 'You take a texture, and you map it on polygons, and it looks like a 3D game.' When I got off the phone, I told Carmack about it, and he just kind of looked up for a few seconds, and then said: 'Yeah, I can do that.' But he didn't write any texture-mapping until a year after that, when we did our last good game for Softdisk, *Catacomb 3D*, in EGA. But it wasn't a shooter – you were using spells instead of guns. And it came out in November '91, which was still almost half a year before Paul's game, *Ultima Underworld*, came out. So after that we decided to do another texture-mapped game in VGA, this time for Apogee: a 3D version of one of our favourite games, *Castle Wolfenstein*.

RG: Did you have to talk to Silas Warner, *Wolfenstein*'s designer?

JR: Nope. See, Muse Software went bankrupt in 1984. And we knew the name had to be owned by somebody, but we couldn't find them, so we tried to find another name for our game, but none of them sounded as cool. Turned out the trademark was owned by a lady in Baltimore who'd bought Muse's assets years ago. I don't remember how much it was to buy it from her, but it was real cheap.

RG: So this all happened so fast, really. But how is it that *Wolfenstein*, which only came out several months after *Ultima Underworld*, ran so much better?

ROMERO'S WEB OF DOOM



JR: Well, for us, we were all about fast action arcade stuff. And there was no way we could put a game out that ran slow, because it was just aesthetically wrong for us. So we erased the levels' floors and ceilings, because it would take too long for the machine to texture-map those two things. We changed the game design so nothing would slow us down – we just wanted no stopping. Just run over everything and destroy.

RG: How long did it take to finish?

JR: Well, Carmack started playing around with it in December, and work started seriously in January. And we just went right to work on making it. By the end of February, John's engine was pretty much done, and Tom and I started designing levels in it, fast. Making those levels was the most boring shit ever, because they were so simple. Tom was so bored – I kept on bugging him to do it. I told him about Scott Miller's Nissan 350Z and George Broussard's Acura NSX; we needed cool cars, too. Whenever he got distracted, I'd tell him, 'Dude, NSX! NSX!'



RG: How well did it do initially?

JR: Well, I had this idea about doing a hint book. Scott ran with that, and came up with this pricing model where the first episode was free, the trilogy was 35 bucks, the second trilogy was another 15 bucks, and then the hint book was ten more bucks. So 60 bucks for all six episodes and the hint book. And in the first month, we got 4,000 orders, and 99 per cent were for the whole $60 package. So, 240,000 dollars in the first month. That destroyed everything Apogee thought of as success. After that, we did *Spear Of Destiny*, the retail version.

RG: And then you went on to *Doom*…

JR: Yeah. We always wanted to do new things. And we were inspired by how we used to play *D&D*. John was the DM, and he had a world that he'd been running for years. We started playing in 1990, and probably in '91, I destroyed his world.

RG: How did you manage that?

JR: Well, John follows the rules he makes. Basically, I freed the demons onto the material plane, and they took over. So he ended it. It's funny – one of the reasons why the world was destroyed was the demons tempted me with a Ring of Vampiric Regeneration and a Daikatana. So his world was destroyed because of a Daikatana. There's something to that!

RG: So what did this have to do with *Doom*, though?

JR: Oh, well, *Doom* was inspired by the whole demon thing. And we thought it would be cool to juxtapose that old religious stuff with a futuristic space station setting. Demons in space. We'd actually

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



JOHN CARMACK
(CO-FOUNDER OF ID SOFTWARE)

"When I was 19 years old, I was doing contract programming work for Softdisk Publishing, and they were trying to hire me full-time. I finally agreed to drive down to Shreveport from Kansas City to meet the guys I had been working with, but I didn't really have any intention of taking a job. I enjoyed meeting Jay Wilbur and Tom Hall, but what hooked me was meeting John Romero and Lane Roath – they were the first programmers I had met that I wanted to learn from. I was self-taught and only just out on my own, but Romero had already made dozens of games for the Apple II, and he could rattle off all the mapped I/O locations from memory. He was the coolest programmer I had ever met.

"I took the job, and I immersed myself completely in programming, for the first time surrounded by other like-minded people and supported by books, magazines, and equipment that I never had before. This led to what I look back on as the first of my big learning periods. When I started making the early technical breakthroughs in smooth scrolling and 3D, Romero was the one that loudly proclaimed that it was absolutely necessary that we start our own company, and id Software was born."

discussed doing an *Aliens* game with 20th Century Fox, but in the end, we decided we needed to do our own IP.

RG: Was *Doom* based on *Wolfenstein*'s technology, or completely its own thing?

JR: Totally new. He created a whole new data structure, a new way of doing things. He came up with the idea of… well, he worked on the engine for a few months, and thought the engine was pretty solid at one point, but I made a level that had this recursive stairway on it, and that made it go really slow. So he went off to work for a week and found this BSP tree technology created by a researcher named Bruce Nailer. BSP was supposed to be applied to 3D models; it wasn't meant to be used for levels. It was about getting rid of all the polygons on the parts of a model you can't see, so the computer doesn't waste time rendering those. And that just revolutionised the FPS. It just made everything so much faster.

RG: What did you code for *Doom*?

JR: I wrote DoomED, the level editor, and also did the programming for all the saving and loading, and probably the most important code I did was basically every single door, light, stairs, switches, platforms – anything that moved or could be interacted with, I did that.

RG: The *Doom* levels were a lot more complicated than *Wolfenstein*'s – did it take some time to adapt to that?

JR: When we started making *Doom* levels, we didn't know what they should look like. Initially, they were very bright, the floors and ceilings were at a fixed height, the walls were at right angles… We were still in the *Wolfenstein* design mode, and needed to break out of that. We tried basing levels on military architecture, but that didn't work, because that was all at right angles, too! So I started to play with the editor, and came up with stairways, and slanted ceilings, and stuff like that. And I was just making up rules as I went along. So the first thing I made to demonstrate this was a room from the level E1M2, which has a long platform elevator, and there's some high, raised platforms on the sides that are brightly lit, with monsters in them throwing fireballs at you. Everybody loved it, so that's the way we went after that.

RG: So did the architecture come before the monster design, or vice versa?

JR: The same time. It was done in a year, so we really were doing everything at the same time. Adrian Carmack was making clay demons at the same time that John was doing the engine. He was making them in clay because we didn't want to do the same thing we did with *Wolfenstein*, where he had eight rotations of a character, and they were all hand pixel-edited. So we put the clay models on a Lazy Susan table, and just rotated it and took video snapshots of eight different rotations of each character. Then we took that raw data and put it into a 256-colour palette, and then all Adrian had to do after that was colourise it. And we got a guy to come in and do the donkey work of removing all the background pixels. It's funny, because ten years later, some dude in a strip club said: 'Hey, John, dude, remember me? I cleaned up all the pixels!' I was like, 'Dude, we're in a strip club!'

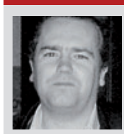
RG: But didn't Greg Punchatz do the monster models?

JR: Yeah, we figured out that clay tears after a while. So we got Greg Punchatz, who's the son of Don Punchatz – he did the *Doom* logo – to make monsters out of latex and metal and all that kind of stuff. He did that while his dad was figuring out what to do with the game cover. And I was like, 'Well, there's a ton of demons coming, and you're a marine blowing 'em all away!' He brought this guy – a model – over to get positions and stuff, and the model was trying to do the right positions, but he just wasn't getting it. So I said: 'F*ck, let me do it.' I ripped off my shirt, and I was like, 'Rargh!' So that's me on the *Doom* cover. The model guy is the demon grabbing my arm.

RG: When did you add in the multiplayer?

JR: We'll, we'd decided to publish *Doom* ourselves, so *Doom* supported modem-to-modem multiplayer, and then just after *Doom II*'s release, I met these guys who made this online service called DWANGO, and they gave me their disk. And immediately

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



JON HARE
(CO-FOUNDER OF SENSIBLE SOFTWARE)

"From what I know about John Romero and his games, it is clear that they had a substantial impact in the mid-late Nineties. In many ways he epitomises the new-age American developers of the Nineties. His games, as did those of Westwood, signalled the end of the power of European game designers and developers as gaming's greatest developers."



» [PC] Take out the guns, exchange the sci-fi theme with a fantasy one and the end result is *Hexen*.



» *Doom*'s phenomenal success made *Doom II* an inevitable project.

after that, I got super-involved in it. I basically changed their business. I wrote their DWANGO client at home – I didn't have time to do it at work. And so then we went and patched *Doom* and *Doom II*, so they supported internet multiplayer.

RG: How long was it before you started seeing major financial returns for *Doom*?

JR: Immediately! As soon as it came out, *Wolfenstein* was a joke in comparison. And it was all our money; it wasn't split between Apogee and us. So we bought our cars. And at the same time, we were working on *Doom II*, but there was just so much going on. 1994 was the year of *Doom*. No one could talk about anything else. People were just obsessed with it. Even *Mario* hadn't gotten to that level.

RG: Was there any controversy about it back then?

JR: Yeah, it started right after *Doom*'s release. I wasn't aware of it, though, and I really didn't care. It's just like Columbine. Quit trying to blame media or games or whatever for people's personal problems. It's not even useful for me to go there.

RG: How soon after *Doom II* did you start discussing *Quake*?

JR: Well, *Doom II* came out in October '94. And so much was going on then, and yeah, we started thinking about *Quake* in November. 'Quake' was actually the name of a character in John's *D&D* campaign, and he was just a super hardcore badass that had this huge hammer that he could throw through buildings. We wanted to do a game about him.

RG: Did that inspire the game's more fantasy-inclined aesthetic, as compared to *Doom*'s sci-fi feel?

JR: Well, *Quake* was, at the very beginning, not fully defined. We knew what kind of technology was going to be developed. John came up with: 'It's going to be full 3D, we're going to use light maps, and it's going to be really fast.' And the game design was: 'Well, it's going to be Quake! It's going to be that guy!' It's funny: when I saw *Darksiders*, I was like, 'That's it, right there. That's what I wanted *Quake* to be.'

RG: What happened?

JR: The technology was constantly changing, so we couldn't do much with the game design. It took a year for that engine to be workable. And by November '95, we were just so burned out on making a game that wasn't really going anywhere. We had this big company meeting, and we started hashing out all the problems we had. I was saying, 'Look, I know this is really hard, but it's taken longer for every one of our games to come out, and this one isn't an exception. We need to spend the time that it takes making a great game design around this engine.' Carmack was on the fence, and American McGee and Dave Taylor were on the side of, 'You know what? Let's just throw *Doom* weapons in the game and get it done. I can't do this any more.' I couldn't believe it: how could you want to throw the engine away with a shitty game design? I was just fighting everybody's attitude, but I thought, 'Okay, I'm done here. This company is fractured.' So I rewrote the design – put *Doom* weapons in the engine, bring it out as fast as possible.

RG: Even so, *Quake*'s still a pretty good game…

JR: Sure, *Quake*'s a really great game. I still believe the single-player was just awesome and scary, and, of course, the multiplayer was revolutionary. But it could've really been something else.

RG: What happened when it was eventually finished?

JR: It was a Saturday, June 22nd. And I was up at the office, mastering the game. I was by myself – everyone else was at home, broken. Michael Abrash dropped into the office for a little bit, and was like, 'Hey, what's goin' on?' And I said: 'Uh, I'm putting *Quake* out to the internet! How about that? We've been working for a year and a half and now it's coming out when no one's around!' He left, and I said to myself: 'Well, this is how it ends.'

RG: Straight to Ion Storm, then?

JR: I'd already contacted Tom Hall, telling him I was done with id, and wanted to start a new company. No one knew, but then I called up GT Interactive, and told them my plans and asked whether they'd be interested in talking about funding. They were like, 'Oh, yeah, of course.' And the very next day, id said: 'We want you to leave.'

RG: Word got back to them, huh?

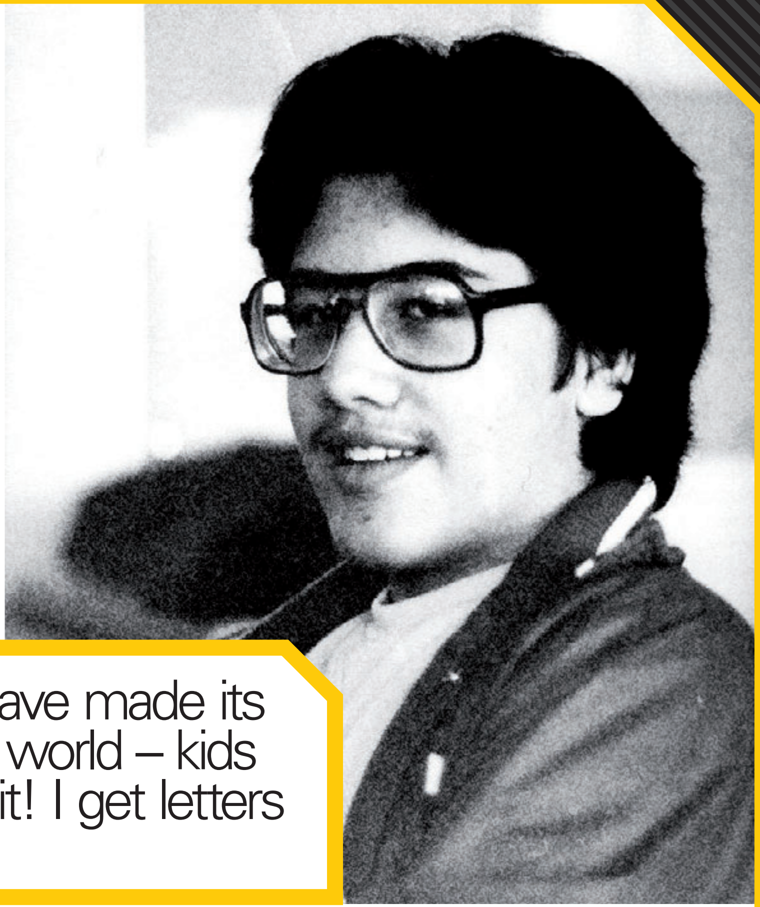
JR: Yep. But it's fine, because I was going to leave anyway.

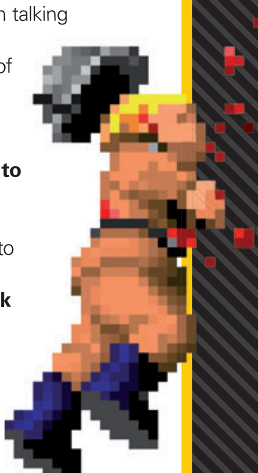
RG: Do you ever talk to John now?

JR: No, no, I haven't spoken to him in years.

RG: Anyway, what happened

> "Dangerous Dave made its way around the world – kids in India still love it! I get letters from them"





THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



SCOTT MILLER (FOUNDER, APOGEE SOFTWARE)

"I have only the highest respect for John as a creative visionary and game designer. In my opinion, id Software lost their Paul McCartney when John departed, and their games have lacked heart and creative spark since that time.

"*Doom* is locked in as one of the finest technical and creative innovations in gaming history. Only 3-5 other games have had a similar industry-jolting impact. John's contribution to this game was essential.

"*Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*, both, are each career achievements. I feel like things started to break down with *Quake*, as the focus on tech meant that gameplay remained stagnant.

"But overall, John Romero has his place secured among gaming's greatest developers."

with the deal between GT Interactive and Ion Storm?

JR: We had a meeting in New York, then they came to our temp offices in Dallas before we went into the Chase Tower. After I left id, I spent six months trying to find the company that would be able to fund this thing and not go under. We talked to Activision, Mindscape, GT, Eidos… Out of all of them, Eidos was the company that looked like it was a rocket. *Tomb Raider* was their rocket. I didn't want Ion Storm to be the company that was going to save some old sad-sack company from destruction. I wanted Ion to be on a rocket. And Eidos did an amazing job working with us. I love those guys. They stuck with us through all the bullshit PR stuff, all the rumour sites…

RG: Were you thinking about *Daikatana* at this time?

JR: A lot of company stuff at first, but then in January '97, I started working on *Daikatana*. It was different, though. At id, it was like home; a company that I built. And I felt invulnerable there, like we could do anything. But at Ion, the amount of risks we were taking was more to do with the company itself – risks I didn't have before. So with *Daikatana*, I didn't feel like I should take a risk on the game design like I would have at id. So I decided to play it safe and do an FPS, but to push the genre just a little bit if I could, by having a shitload of content, AI sidekicks, and some RPG elements.

RG: So what do you think was the primary cause of *Daikatana*'s troubles?

JR: The problems with that company were with the other co-founders. It was the other co-founders and also, basically, hiring a ton of people who had never made games before. The people I'd found had done really great work making mods and levels and that kind of stuff, and I thought, 'Why not give these guys a chance to make a game?' It was an experiment. But they weren't used to working long hours, and communicating… I don't know, I just expected more. It was nothing like id, and that was a shock to me. But you know what? We made the game.

RG: So after Ion collapsed, you downsized and started Monkeystone, a mobile games developer. Was that so you could go back to your coding roots?

JR: Yeah, the whole reason for Monkeystone was for me to make games with Tom Hall again, and for me to code all day long. At Ion, Tom and I were working on separate games. And so this was a chance to get into the mobile market, and just make games together, all day long, as many hours as we want. Just like at id. We started that company in July of 2001, and we left the office in October 2003. So just a little over two years. But in that two years, it was awesome. It was the best time I'd had in my entire career.



RG: So why did you leave?

JR: Well, one of the reasons for starting the company was so my girlfriend Stevie and I would work together, and make games. And so while we were doing this, I was working on *Red Faction* in the beginning of 2003, and Stevie started messing around with the guy who was our executive producer. So she was cheating on me, and I found out, and that was the end. In one day, the whole thing exploded, and she was gone, and that ruined the whole thing for me. I just wasn't excited any more. So after that, I knew I had to get out of Dallas.

RG: Where did you go?

JR: I went to San Diego, because I love that place, and I went to Midway, because I could take over the *Gauntlet* IP. I did that in October 2003. I really wanted to reinvent the IP, and work out who *Gauntlet*'s characters really were, and see if we could tell a story with them. But when it came to June of 2005, Midway basically told us we had to rush the game out, because three other games had dropped out of their Q4 schedule. I told them we needed a little longer, and they said: 'Guess what? No. You guys can't drop out.' And I was just, like, 'We can't do this!' And they said: 'We're going to do it. Thank you for working here.' They basically said: 'We don't give a shit if it's a f**kin' rock in a box. It doesn't matter. It's gonna be out there.'

So that's what they did, and that's why I got 'Special Thanks' instead of 'Project Lead' [in the game's credits] or whatever.

RG: Which sort of brings us to your latest project…

JR: Yeah, after that, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do. And I was excited and interested in MMOs, so I talked to some other companies, and I was also talking to a guy who was starting an MMO company, and we really hit it off and decided, basically, that I'm going to co-found an MMO company with this other guy, and that's how we made Gazillion Entertainment. I can't give you any details just yet, though!



"After I left id, I tried to find a company that could fund this thing and not go under"

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS



VINCE DESI
(CEO, RUNNING WITH SCISSORS)

"It was a very long time ago when I met John. The original *Postal* had just come out and he was at the top of the game industry. Despite the crazy ads and long hair I felt he was very sincere and real, and not deserving of all the negative remarks to come. History is often unjust but no one can challenge the fact that John was a key partner in changing the game industry with *Wolfenstein 3D* and *Doom*. He will always have my respect."

THE INDUSTRY SPEAKS

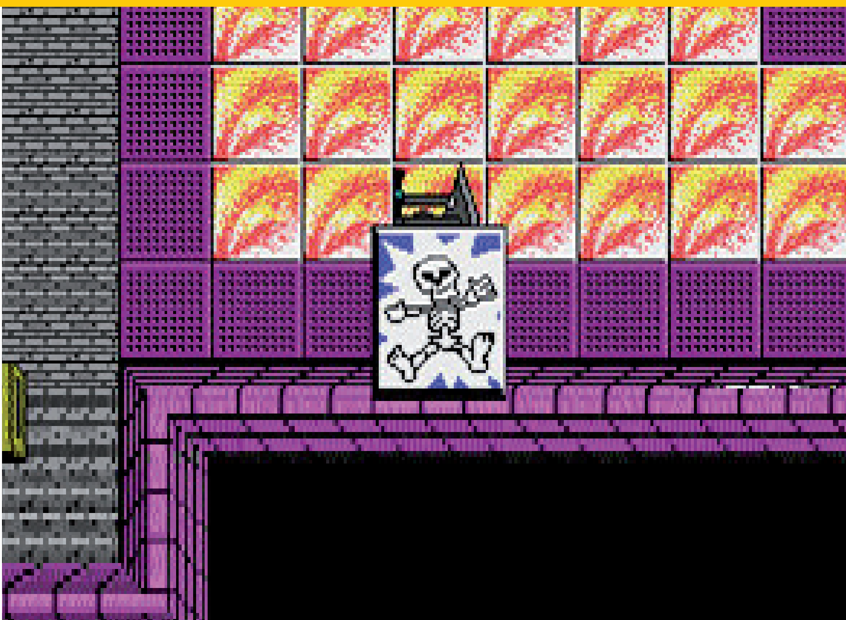


STEVE LYCETT
(EXECUTIVE PRODUCER, SUMO DIGITAL)

"A word of gratitude for the sleep deprivation, late homework and money spent on PC upgrades while trying to hone my par times in *Doom*. Yes, thanks John. Thanks a lot.

"Discounting the id stuff as everyone picks it, my favourite Romero game is actually *Gauntlet: Seven Sorrows*, which was sadly overlooked!

"Not sure Metacritic would agree with me on *Gauntlet*, but I enjoyed it. Then again I'm quite a big fan of *Gauntlet* full stop, which reminds me, I really must find out from F9 what happened to the DS version…"



›› [PC] *Rescue Rover* was one of id's games that was developed to fulfil its contract with Softdisk.



›› [PC] Despite its troubled development, *Quake* was a technical showpiece for id and early 3D accelerators.



›› [PC] *Wolfenstein 3D* essentially created what is probably the world's most popular genre today.

* THE READERS ON ROMERO'S GAMES

Who hasn't played a Romero game? Our readers share their memories…

Jet Pilot I love *Wolfenstein 3D*. My dad brought home a copy of the shareware version back when it was first released. I thought it was absolutely amazing, as did he. I'm playing though it again on my PS3. *Doom* and *Quake* may get more accolades for bringing the FPS genre to the masses, but *Wolfenstein 3D* was one of the originals and holds a special place in my gaming heart.

herlequ1n *Wolf 3D* ignited the spark, *Doom* created the FPS genre, and *Quake* showed that even beyond an amazing design lies the multiplayer madness that drives games nowadays. Still, my heart always picks *Doom*.



newoldgamer *Doom II* because it managed the impossible: it was a better game than *Doom*.

Seriously, though, after I played *Doom II* I could not go back to the original. Better levels, great secrets, and the super shotgun!

Kai Definitely *Doom*. It simply blew me away and knocked my socks off back then! And it still is a thrilling gaming experience!

slacey1070 *Doom* for me. While *Commander Keen* was more playable and I probably spent more time on it, nothing can compare to the mind-blowing, eyeball-popping experience of my first game of the shareware *Doom*.

SpifferRabbit *Doom* + double-barrelled shotgun + better level design = *Doom II* = Perfection!

Matt-B Seriously, it's got to be *Doom*. Whereas *Wolfenstein* was the evolution of the earlier *Hovertank* and *Catacomb* games, it totally changed the gaming map with the sophisticated 3D engine, outlandish back story, and online and LAN multiplayer.

I just don't think the first *Quake* was that good; the weapons are poor, the graphics are dingy and angular, and although it offered online multiplayer, that wasn't so hot on a 28K modem. *Quake II*, perhaps, and we're talking, especially if you were an early adopter of broadband. *Quake III* still stands up as a decent game to this day, even if the graphics look a bit dated. However, that's all after Romero moved on, so I'd have to judge his input purely by the first.

Protoman *Commander Keen*, hands down. It was the PC's answer to *Super Mario Bros* and man was it epic!

psj3809 *Commander Keen* or *Doom*/*Quake*? No contest! *Doom* for me. *Commander Keen* was very good but *Doom* was such an epic game when it first came out. Totally changed gaming.

the_hawk I don't think he's ever come close to *Dawn Of The Dead*. That one he did recently, *Diary Of The Dead*, was awful.

Limbrooke *Quake* in its design and evolution, coming from *Doom* and building on what was done in *Duke Nukem 3D*, is an outstanding game that set the industry on its head. From the Nine Inch Nails soundtrack to the eerie mix of gothic architecture and Lovecraft-type inhabitants dwelling inside, *Quake* didn't just enhance the formula set by *Doom*; it made a new standard for all future FPS games to live by. The series never was quite the same after Romero left id either, although with *Quake III* and *Quake Live*, the series has more appropriately revisited the classic roots laid by Romero, among others.

Dr Mario

BORED OF TETRIS? WE PRESCRIBE A DOSE OF DR MARIO

» RETROREVIVAL



» NES
» NINTENDO
» 1990

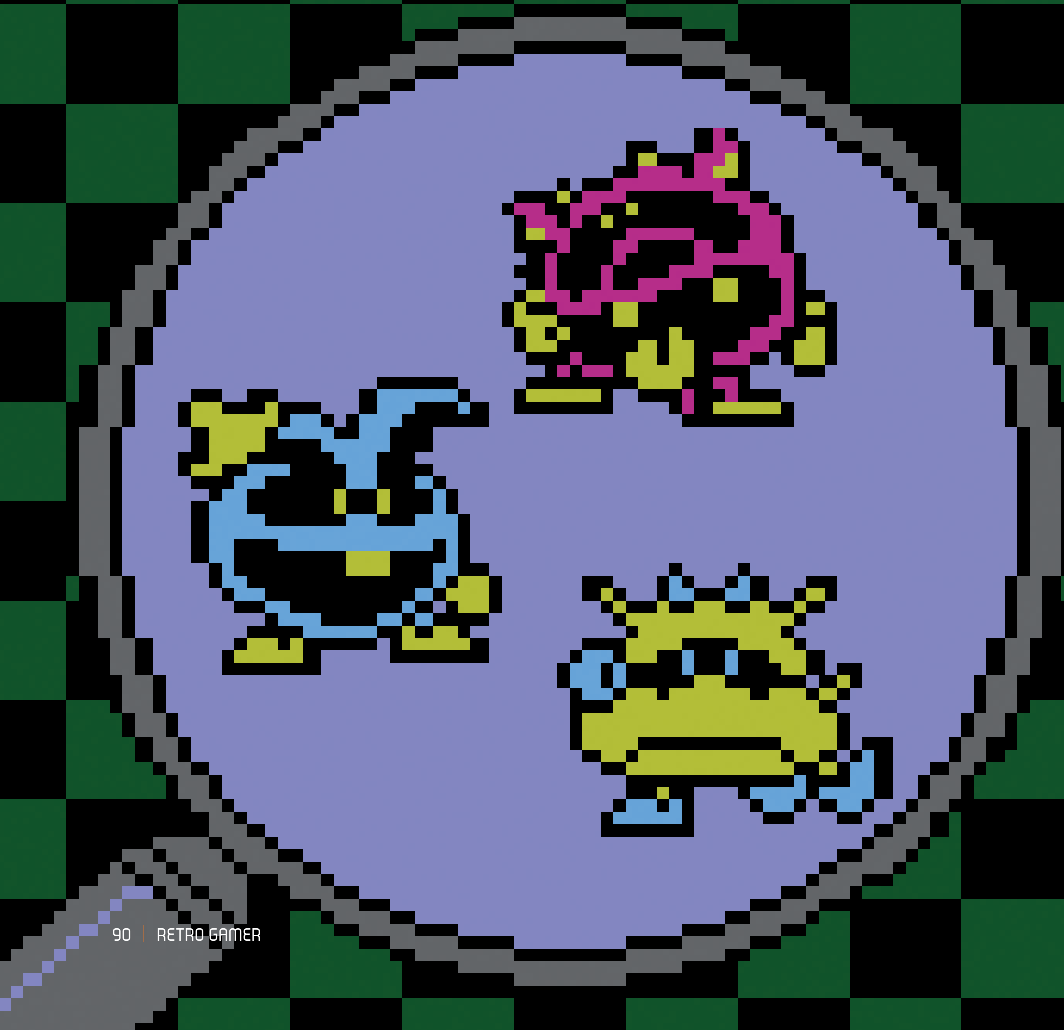
Drugs and Nintendo – two words that you wouldn't normally expect to see in such close proximity to each other. Unless you're discussing *Dr Mario*, of course, which saw Nintendo's R&D1 department dabble with prescription medicine when it set about dressing up *Tetris* in colourful hospital scrubs.

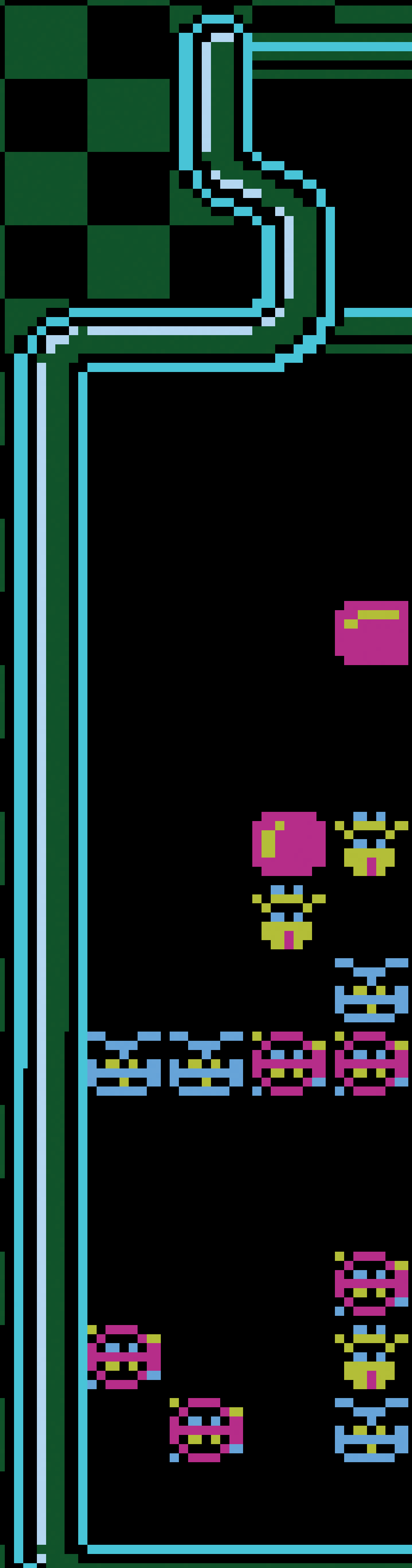
Throughout his prolific videogame career, *Mario* has assumed many different roles. He's taken up golf, took a stint as a boxing referee, and even tried his feet as a footballer, but in 1990 Nintendo's versatile butterball decided to ditch the world of plumbing to become a doctor. We're not sure whether there are many plumbing doctors in the world, but I guess you'd expect Mario to be an expert at solving any health problem that concerned leaking pipes. [Yuck. – Ed]

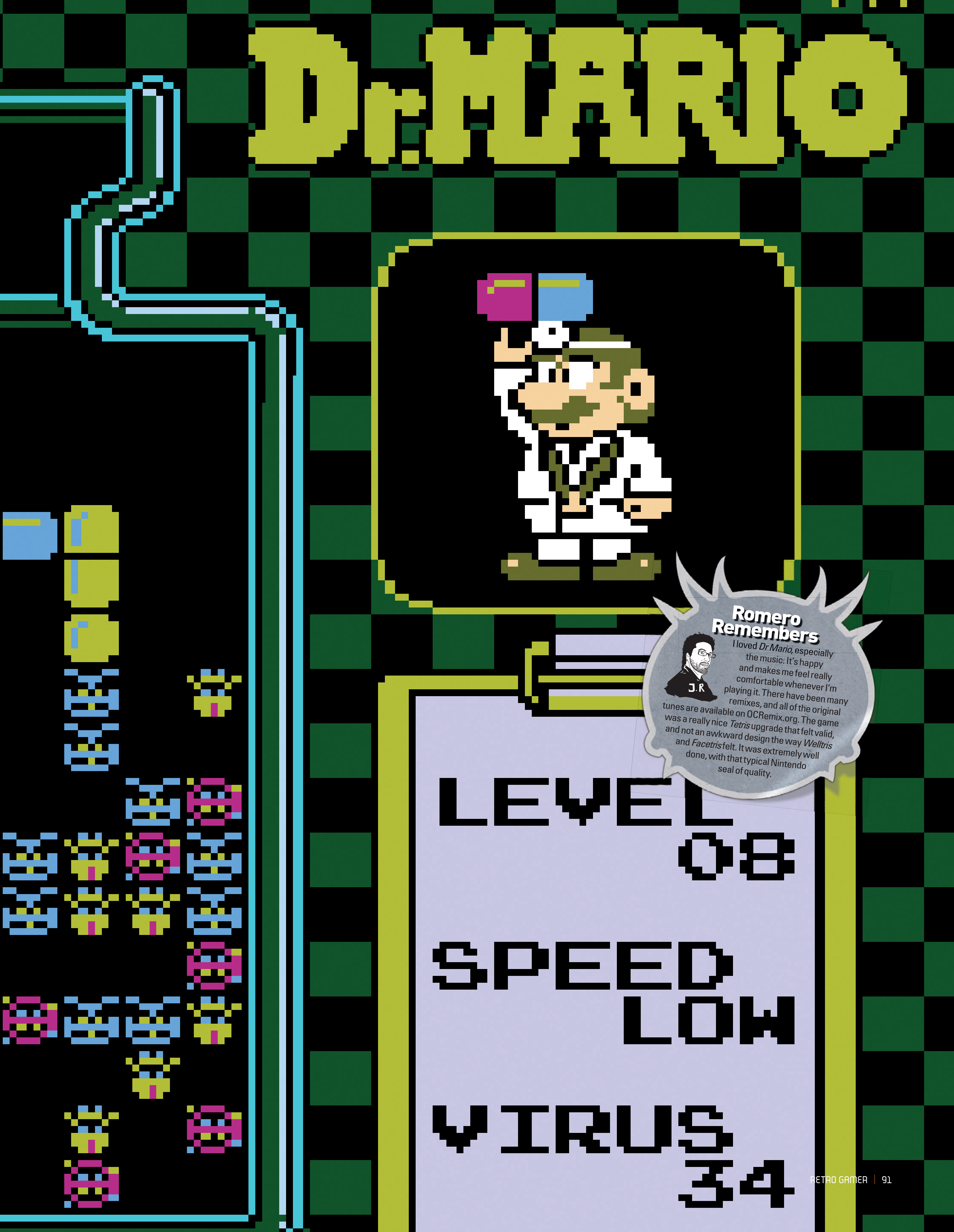
Dr Mario is basically a decent variant of *Tetris*, which finds Mario prescribing various coloured vitamin tablets for the player to stack up around nasty germs that are floating in their playfield. To kill a germ, the player must align four identical coloured vitamin parts, either alongside or on top of the germs, and must do this by rotating the vitamins so that pills of similar colours touch. The game ends once all the germs on screen have been successfully vanquished, so depending on the luck of the vitamin draw, sessions can end pretty quickly, without a long treatment.

Having the various colours to consider, rather than just stacking shapes à la *Tetris*, adds another element to *Dr Mario*'s gameplay, requiring far more thinking and careful planning to ensure success. Thankfully, though, the game comes fitted with a handy options screen that allows you to set the virus level, to determine the number of germs that you have to kill, and choose the speed at which the vitamins cascade down the screen, making it easy to just pick up and get to grips with the gameplay.

Dr Mario is an under-appreciated gem. With its pitch-perfect difficulty, status as a novel twist on a puzzle classic, and its excellent two-player mode, if you're looking for a great puzzle game, this hypothetical doc recommends a course of *Dr Mario*. *







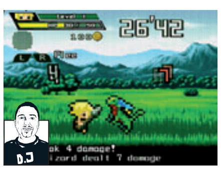
Romero Remembers

I loved *Dr Mario*, especially the music. It's happy and makes me feel really comfortable whenever I'm playing it. There have been many remixes, and all of the original tunes are available on OCRemix.org. The game was a really nice *Tetris* upgrade that felt valid, and not an awkward design the way *Welltris* and *Facetris* felt. It was extremely well done, with that typical Nintendo seal of quality.

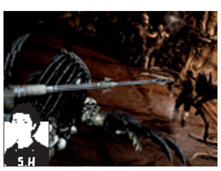


» It's another busy month for retro fans. The 13th episode of Square's Final Fantasy franchise finally arrives, while Dark Void Zero proves to be the best NES game you've never played

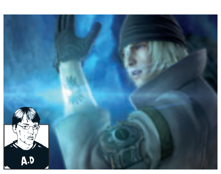
PICKS OF THE MONTH



DARRAN
Half-Minute Hero
Amazingly innovative and brimming with charm, *Half-Minute Hero* is pure PSP gold.



STUART
Aliens vs Predator
It's not perfect by a long stretch, but it works extremely well once you can get online with it.



ASHLEY
Final Fantasy XIII
One of the best battle systems ever designed makes this my favourite *FF* since *VI*.

» FINAL FANTASY XIII

Final Fantasy XIII

AND YOU THOUGHT RANDOM ENCOUNTERS WERE ANNOYING…

Romero Reviews



Thanks to my hero, Nasir Gebelli, Square had its first hit and a future with the excellent *Final Fantasy* series. After a long bout of sequelitis, we now have the awesome *Final Fantasy XIII*. It's good to see it back on track.

INFORMATION

- **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PLAYSTATION 3
- **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** XBOX 360
- **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- **PRICE:** £49.99
- **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX
- **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE
- **PLAYERS:** 1

BRIEF HISTORY

» When *Final Fantasy* was released in 1987 Square was in serious financial trouble. Fortunately the NES game became a massive success and has gone on to spawn 12 games and numerous spin-offs. *Final Fantasy XIII* is the first time that the series has ever appeared on a Microsoft console.

PS3



» [PS3] There's no denying that the CGI looks good, but it doesn't draw you into Square's new world.

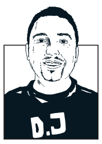
GO DEEPER

The facts behind Final Fantasy XIII

» ***Final Fantasy XIII* made its first official appearance at E3 in 2006**

» **There are numerous spin-off games including the *Chocobo* series and the *Crystal Chronicles* and *Kingdom Hearts* franchises**

» ***Final Fantasy* gets its name because director Hironobu Sakaguchi declared that his final game at Square would be a fantasy game**



***Final Fantasy XIII* is a brilliant RPG that comes with one massive caveat: it doesn't get brilliant until you've experienced at least 25 hours of utter monotony.**

Now most gamers aren't prepared to put anywhere near that much time into a game, so only the most ardent fans of the series are going to experience everything that Square Enix's new game has to offer, which is a real shame, as there's much to enjoy.

If you don't reach the world of Pulse you'll be forgiven for thinking that Square's 13th *Final Fantasy* consists of nothing more than running down beautifully empty corridors avoiding random encounters, while fighting the odd boss and having to watch dull, over-long cut-scenes. A generic story doesn't help matters, while many of the included characters are unlikable and typically clichéd.

If those first 25 hours are crushingly dull – it's well over an hour and a half before you even start levelling up – they are at least saved by a genuinely clever and well-structured battle system. Fast and furious and allowing you to pull off all sorts of different fighting combos thanks to the clever Paradigm system, it's typical of the evolution that we expect from Square's premier RPG series and makes your many encounters genuinely thrilling to play.

The real question, however, is as good as the battle system is, will it be enough for most players to slog through over 20 genuinely dull hours? The short answer for many is going to be no, which means that in trying to deliver a brand new *Final Fantasy* experience, Square has alienated many potential new owners – don't forget that this is the first mainline *Final Fantasy* game to appear on a non-Sony console since *VI* on the SNES.

Those prepared to put in the time will find *Final Fantasy* to be a truly mesmerising experience that borrows heavily from Western game design but still manages to feel distinctly Japanese. Everyone else is simply going to play this for five hours and then wonder what all the fuss is about.



» [PS3] The combat system in *Final Fantasy XIII* is incredible and easily its best asset.

OPINION



I haven't played a proper *Final Fantasy* game since *VIII*. I stopped because JRPGs were stagnating, so I'm really pleased to see Square Enix try something bravely experimental with *XIII*. I'm currently 22 hours in and have loved every moment so far.

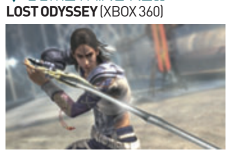
Ashley Day

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
FINAL FANTASY (NES)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
LOST ODYSSEY (XBOX 360)



In a nutshell

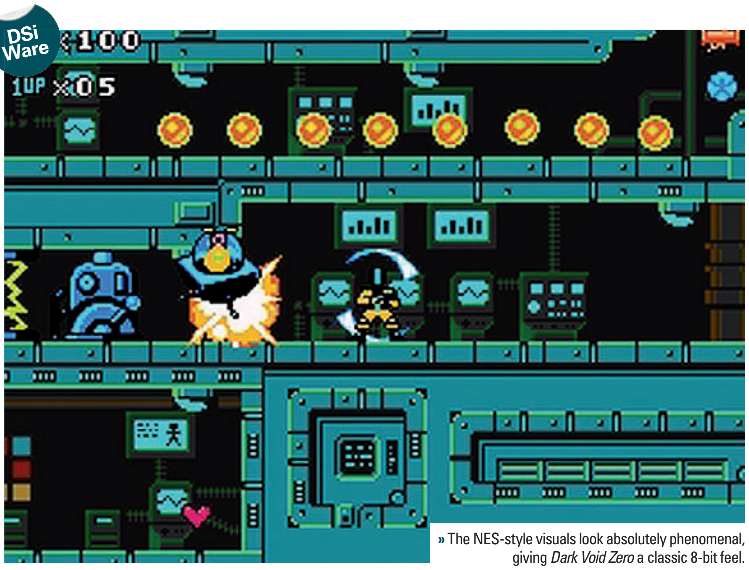
It's a brave, dynamic game, but you have to show an incredible amount of commitment in order to see this. Kudos to Square for constantly evolving the series, but this may be a step too far for many. It certainly was for us.

» Scores

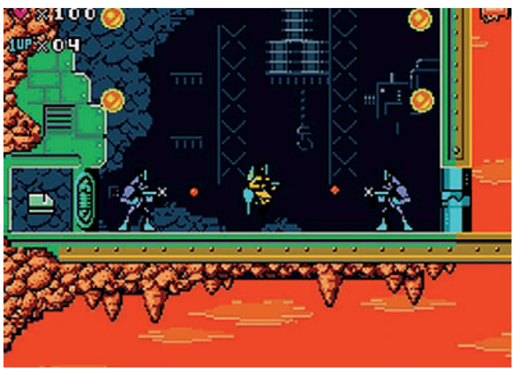
Presentation	87%
Graphics	92%
Sound	80%
Playability	78%
Addictivity	65%

Overall 70%

DSi Ware



» The NES-style visuals look absolutely phenomenal, giving *Dark Void Zero* a classic 8-bit feel.



Dark Void Zero

A CLASSIC 20 YEARS IN THE MAKING

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** DSiWARE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** 500 POINTS » **PUBLISHER:** CAPCOM » **DEVELOPER:** OTHER OCEAN » **PLAYERS:** 1



If you read through *Dark Void Zero*'s manual, you'll learn that it's an old NES game that's only just been rediscovered. This is, of course, a load of complete and utter tosh, but it's typical of the amazing presentation and attention to detail that this classy retro blaster possesses. Indeed, from the moment you're told to blow into your DS to blow the dust off the on-screen cart, you know you're in for a treat, and it doesn't disappoint.

Playing like a cross between Capcom's very own *Section Z* and Nintendo's *Metroid*, *Dark Void Zero* is a delightfully tough blaster that features fantastic NES-styled visuals, an amazing array of thumping retro tunes, and tight, finely honed gameplay. It's also insanely tough, instantly recalling memories of early Capcom NES titles from back in the day like *Mega Man* and *Bionic Commando*. Enemies constantly hound you and while you have access to a variety of different weapons, it's initially extremely overwhelming. Once you get to grips with each stage's layout, however, and discover the jet pack, progress becomes far easier, although the stiff challenge always remains.

With its hardcore blasting and heavy focus on exploration, *Dark Void Zero* stands apart from the many puzzle games that are currently cluttering up Nintendo's DSiWare service. It's going to be a little too tough for some, but those that stick with it will discover a satisfying blaster that tests your game-playing skills to the limit. Now if only it had come out back in the day…

OPINION



I've only played a bit of this so far but I already like it more than the 'proper' *Dark Void*. It really feels like a genuine NES game and has a structure and gameplay style that appeals to me. If you've always wanted *Metroid* meets *Section Z* then you'll probably agree.

Ashley Day

» Scores

Presentation	88%
Graphics	86%
Sound	90%
Playability	88%
Addictivity	85%
Overall	**86%**

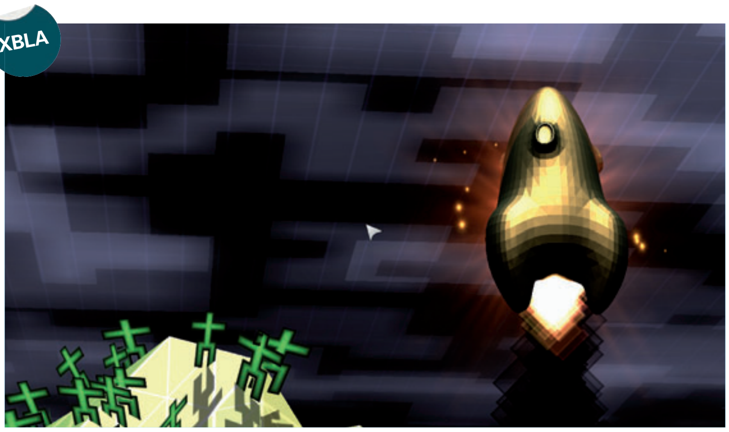
Darwinia+

» **SYSTEM:** XBOX LIVE ARCADE » **PRICE:** 1,200 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

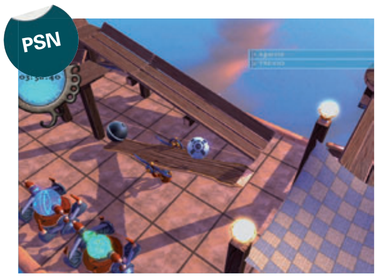
» **While the price** seems steep, you're actually getting both *Darwinia* and sequel *Multiwinia* for your hard-earned cash. A bizarre cross between an RTS and a traditional shooter, *Darwinia+* is a thoroughly absorbing game that's only really let down by its often clunky controls. Delightfully retro with its vector-style visuals and simplistic level layouts, *Darwinia+* is the perfect antidote for those who require their games to be a little different.

» Score **71%**

XBLA



PSN



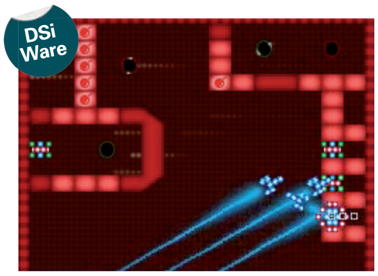
Switchball

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £6.29 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

» **Drawing influence from** *Marble Madness* and *Mercury*, *Switchball* is an intriguing little puzzler that will test your brain as well as your reflexes. Each stage needs to be completed in a set amount of time, and clever layouts and physics use ensure that you'll be challenged right to the end. An enjoyable little puzzler that's only really let down by some really lengthy loading times that greatly interrupt its flow.

» Score **74%**

DSi Ware



Reflect Missile

» **SYSTEM:** DSiWARE
» **PRICE:** 500 POINTS » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **An excellent twist** on *Missile Command*, *Breakout* and *Reflector* that has you bouncing missiles around the screen in order to take down a set number of targets that are cleverly hidden within devious brick layouts. Instantly accessible, but boasting an insane amount of depth, *Reflect Missile* features a massive number of puzzles to play through, making it well worth the low asking price.

» Score **89%**

» ALIENS VS PREDATOR



» [360] As the Alien you can harvest humans by pinning them and summoning a Facehugger to have its way with them.

Aliens vs Predator

THE GOOD, THE BAD AND THE FUGLY

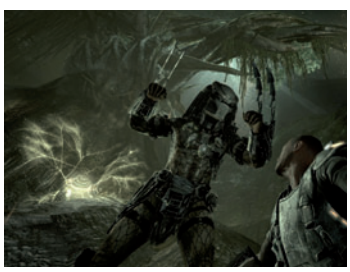
» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** 360 » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC, PS3 » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £49.99 » **PUBLISHER:** SEGA » **DEVELOPER:** REBELLION » **PLAYERS:** 1

S.H

The thing with the latest *Aliens vs Predator* game is that it keeps firmly to tradition.

You can't go prone, there's very little strategy involved, and there's absolutely no cover system other than the one that involves hiding behind walls and edging along slowly with your index finger on the trigger button. But given the history of the *AVP* games, this no-frills approach actually makes sense. As such, it seems wrong to criticise the game for staying true to those old FPS mechanics that have got the series this far, despite making it feel a tad dated when compared to its contemporaries.

All three campaigns, each around three hours long, are good enough to give some enjoyment, and this is helped by the variety in controls and play styles that Rebellion has given to each of the three species. Play as a marine and you get a creepy corridor shooter, assume the role of the rookie Predator and you're required to scout areas undetected before unleashing stealthy melee attacks, and the Alien missions serve up a mindless game of running up walls and scratching chunks from balding marines and squid-faced hunters. And bolstering this is a fun multiplayer component that offers plenty of entertaining game modes and a nice change of pace.



Certainly the graphics and enemy AI could be better, the story could be more rousing, and the game overall lacks polish, but it's still one of the better *Aliens vs Predator* efforts that Rebellion has released.

OPINION

D.J

Playing Rebellion's latest game is like the last ten years never happened. While it's content to ignore the advances in the genre made by its competitors, *AVP* remains a highly entertaining game. It's also incredibly scary, especially when you're playing as the marines.

Darran Jones

» Scores

Presentation	70%
Graphics	70%
Sound	80%
Playability	80%
Addictivity	75%

Overall 74%

Plants vs Zombies

TOWER DEFENCE MEETS iPHOTOSYNTHESIS

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** iPHONE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** PC » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £1.79 » **PUBLISHER:** POPCAP GAMES » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1

S.H

***Plants vs Zombies* finally makes it to the iPhone, and we're pleased to report that it's just as brilliant as previous iterations. Maybe even better, actually.**

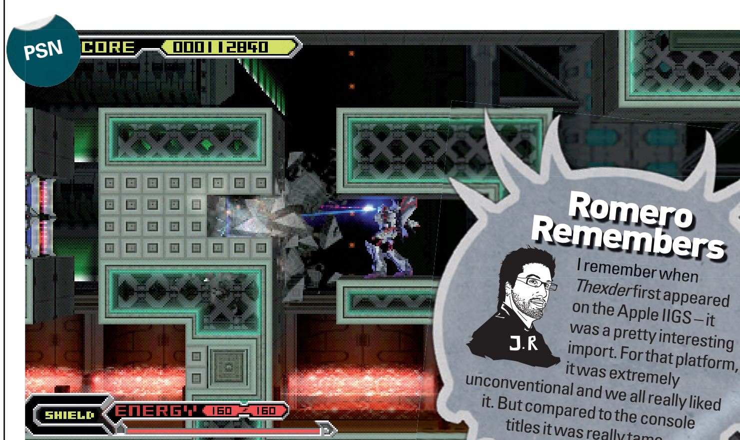
If you're not familiar with the setup, you play a gardener who must protect his home from the walking dead by cultivating zombie-killing vegetation. Initially the plants at your disposal are of the seed-spitting variety, acting like gun emplacements to conquer the encroaching undead hordes, but with each wave of zombies you defeat, more varieties of defences become available, and very soon you have to hand-pick the ones you want to take into battle. Strategy comes into play through the nurturing, selection and positioning of your plants. In order to grow your defences you must collect sunlight that appears randomly on the playing field and must be touched to be stockpiled. Some plants, however, such as Sunflowers, won't attack but will instead produce added sunlight, allowing you to grow your army faster. This means that success comes from ensuring that you have a steady influx of sunlight to farm your defences while at the same time ensuring that you have enough plants to drive out the zombies and protect the sunflowers.

While it's a shame that the iPhone version is missing the survival mode, puzzle mode and mini-games of the PC iteration, this addictive and humorous tower defence title is still an essential purchase, and because of the iPhone's intuitive touch-screen controls, plus the fact that it's so darn cheap, this is probably the very best version to get.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	80%
Sound	90%
Playability	90%
Addictivity	90%

Overall 90%



Romero Remembers

J.R

I remember when *Thexder* first appeared on the Apple IIGS – it was a pretty interesting import. For that platform, it was extremely unconventional and we all really liked it. But compared to the console titles it was really tame.

Thexder NEO

» **SYSTEM:** PSN » **PRICE:** £6.29 » **PUBLISHER:** SQUARE ENIX » **PLAYERS:** 1-6

» **Now here's a** game that deserves to stay in the past. *Thexder NEO* is a crusty old shooter that features horribly clunky controls, dull level design and uninspiring visuals. Kudos to Square Enix for reviving one of its old catalogue titles as a download for consoles and we hope that this is the first of many, but why we've been given this instead of, for example, the excellent *Einhänder* is a real mystery. A totally bland shooter that's best left alone.

» **Score 49%**

iPhone



OPINION

PopCap is the king of casual games and this iPhone conversion is an absolute blast. Genuinely hilarious and with great visuals, *Plants vs Zombies* is perfect for gaming on the go and is another superb strategy title that every iPhone owner needs to download.



» [iPhone] If a zombie breaks through your defences, a lawn mower will mow them down and act as a last line of protection.

Broken Sword: The Director's Cut

REVOLUTION RAISES THE BAR AGAIN

» **FEATURED SYSTEM:** IPHONE » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** DS, WII » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
» **PRICE:** £2.99 » **PUBLISHER:** REVOLUTION STUDIOS » **DEVELOPER:** IN-HOUSE » **PLAYERS:** 1

After playing the director's cut of *Broken Sword* last year, we thought it couldn't get any better. How wrong we were…

Basically, while this new iPhone port appears identical to the Wii and DS versions from last year, it actually manages to improve on an already highly polished game. The touch controls are excellent and greatly improve on those in the DS version, which were pretty responsive to begin with. It makes *Broken Sword* a joy to play and allows you to immerse yourself fully in the adventure.

Other benefits are purely a result of Revolution's game appearing on such a small and high-res screen. *Broken Sword*'s art design has always impressed, but it looks particularly sumptuous here and allows you to genuinely appreciate the intricate work that obviously went into each location and animated character.

Perhaps the most impressive aspect of this port is its price. At a paltry £3, this makes the DS version feel like a king's ransom, and there's no reason why it shouldn't find its way into every library. After its impressive iPhone debut with *Beneath A Steel Sky*, Revolution's latest simply confirms what many of us already knew: that *Broken Sword* is one of the best point-and-click adventures of all time.



OPINION

With superb controls, a bargain price tag, the iPhone's display enhancing the impressive visuals, and George and Nico's adventure feeling just as classic as we remember, we're struggling to find any fault with this fine adaptation. Fail to snap this up at your peril.

Stuart Hunt

» Scores

Presentation	90%
Graphics	88%
Sound	91%
Playability	94%
Addictivity	93%
Overall	**92%**

» [iPhone] The new art by Dave Gibbons looks great on the iPhone's razor-sharp screen.

iPhone



Romero Reviews

Much like the Apple II version of *Frogger* by Olaf Lubeck, this one is a fail also.

iPhone



The Warlock Of Firetop Mountain

» **SYSTEM:** IPHONE
» **PRICE:** £1.79 » **PLAYERS:** 1

» **Big Blue Bubble** has converted the old *Fighting Fantasy* adventure books to the iPhone and it works a treat. Fans of text adventures are going to be very happy here, and the simple mechanics of the books have been translated well. The lack of a map is a pain and we've encountered some niggling bugs, but this remains a sterling effort.

» Score **74%**

PSN



Frogger Returns

» **SYSTEM:** PSN
» **PRICE:** £3.99 » **PLAYERS:** 1-2

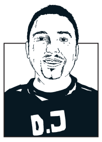
» **We're always up** for a quick game of *Frogger*, but this latest update is highly disappointing. The multiplayer modes can't be played online, the levels are far too long, and the skewed viewpoint means that it's often too hard to work out where it's safe to move Add some truly awful high-definition visuals, clunky controls, and poor collision detection and *Frogger Returns* fails on virtually every level.

» Score **39%**

» HALF-MINUTE HERO

SAVING THE WORLD, 30 SECONDS AT A TIME

Half-Minute Hero



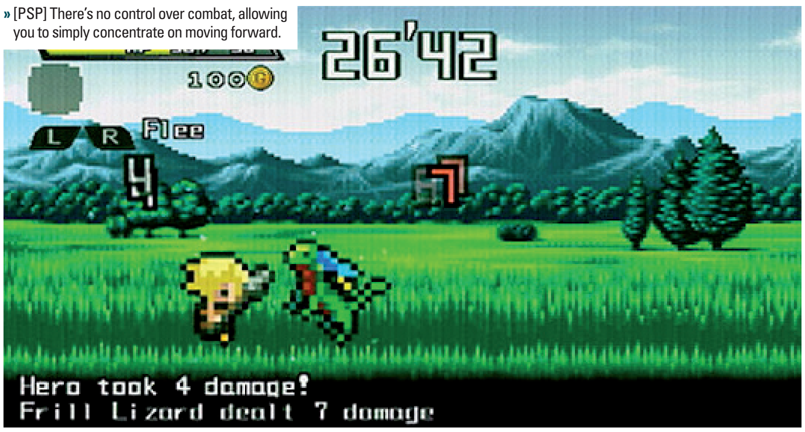
The PSP has really come into its own lately. While it still has a release list that makes you wonder if developers are still interested in creating games for it, Sony's handheld is becoming home to some of the most unique games around. Marvelous Entertainment's *Half-Minute Hero* is another classic example and adds a fresh new twist to the popular RPG genre.

In *Half-Minute Hero*, you still battle monsters, go on quests, visit villages, gain levels, use items and defeat huge, vicious monsters. The kicker here, though, is that you only have 30 seconds in order to do it all. Like *Holy Invasion Of Privacy, Badman!*, it features an extremely humorous translation and is a wonderful little concept that is perfectly suited to bite-sized gaming on the go.

When your quest starts, you're required to do little more than visit a castle and defeat its evil lord. As the stages progress, the tasks that you're given take longer to accomplish and you often have to travel a fair distance to reach your goal. While you can use a handy dash, it drains hit points, which can get you into all sorts of problems if you run into the many random encounters.

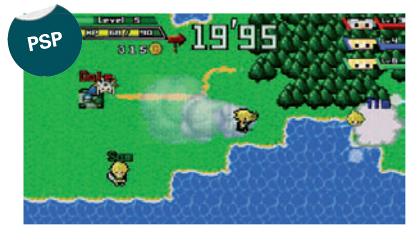
Luckily, certain villages that you enter contain shrines that will reset your clock – for a fee, of course – as well as offer clues to powerful weapons and even allow you to upgrade your equipment. While utilising shrines is key to completing early games, the times you need to beat are often under 30 seconds, meaning that you have to be a real hero and complete stages in one run if you hope to get the best rankings. Easier said than done, as *Half-Minute Hero* does feature a few frustrating difficulty spikes that stop it attaining classic status.

Oozing with charm thanks to the aforementioned witty translation and some delightful old-fashioned visuals that make it look like it's a leftover from the 16-bit period, *Half-Minute Hero* proves that innovative ideas are still alive and well.

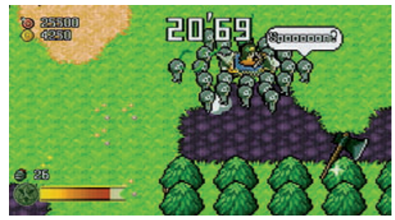


» [PSP] There's no control over combat, allowing you to simply concentrate on moving forward.





» [PSP] In addition to four distinct game modes, there's also a thoroughly enjoyable multiplayer effort.



INFORMATION

- » **FEATURED SYSTEM:** PSP
- » **ALSO AVAILABLE ON:** N/A
- » **RELEASED:** OUT NOW
- » **PRICE:** £19.99
- » **PUBLISHER:** RISING STAR GAMES
- » **DEVELOPER:** MARVELOUS ENTERTAINMENT
- » **PLAYERS:** 1-4

BRIEF HISTORY

» Marvelous Entertainment was founded in 1997 and is based in Shibuya, Tokyo. It originally released games on the Game Boy Advance, and is known for resurrecting or working on classic franchises like *Harvest Moon*, *Space Invaders* and *The New Zealand Story*.

WHY NOT TRY

▼ SOMETHING OLD
YS (MASTER SYSTEM)



▽ SOMETHING NEW
RETRO GAME CHALLENGE (DS)



GO DEEPER

The facts behind Half-Minute Hero

» **The distinct 8-bit visuals take their inspiration from titles such as *Dragon Quest* and *Final Fantasy*.**

» ***Half-Minute Hero*'s soundtrack features music by Japanese band The Alfee. They've been around since 1973.**

OPINION



Yes, it's a new idea and on the PSP, but the core concepts behind *Half-Minute Hero* are deliciously old-school. Highly entertaining and featuring a wealth of different gameplay modes, this is an excellent PSP title that's easily worth its measly £20 price tag. Highly recommended.

Stuart Hunt



» [PSP] Here's the game's Princess mode. It's unlocked when you complete the main game.

In a Nutshell

Wildly inventive and full of charm, *Half-Minute Hero* is a superb addition to the PSP's library. Even RPG haters will be able to take away something from this excellent little game.

» Scores

Presentation	85%
Graphics	84%
Sound	88%
Playability	92%
Addictivity	91%

Overall 90%

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews



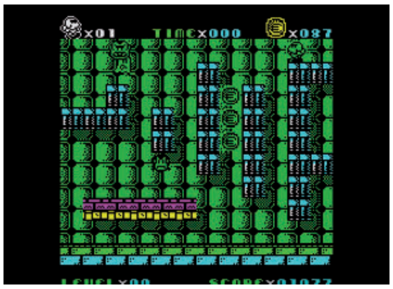
I've just been looking through the last couple of issues and was struck by how shoot-'em-up oriented the Remake of the Month has been. Despite my preference for the genre, this isn't deliberate, although I already suspect that the slot next issue will be similarly shooty. These games deserve to be highlighted. Hopefully you lot don't mind too much!



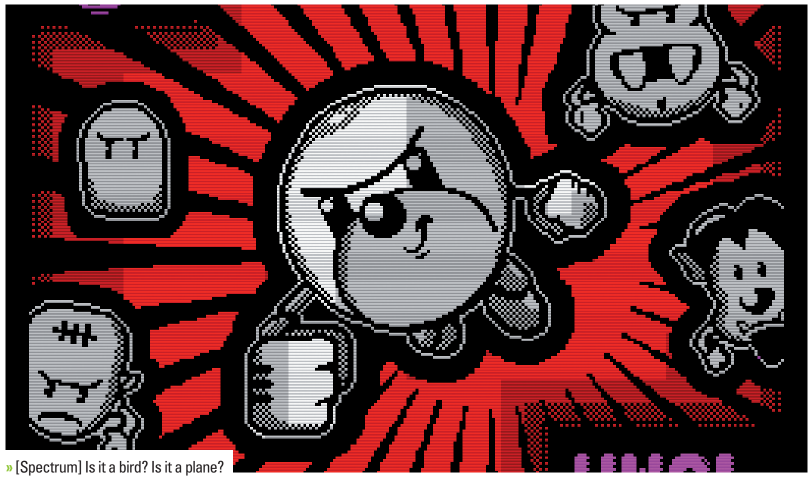
FORMAT: SINCLAIR SPECTRUM
DEVELOPED BY: THE MOJON TWINS
LINK: WWW.MOJONTWINS.COM
RELEASE DATE: 2010
PRICE: FREE
REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

SOLD TO THE ANTHEM GREEN AND GOLD

UWOL: QUEST FOR MONEY



» [Spectrum] We hope your knees will knock.

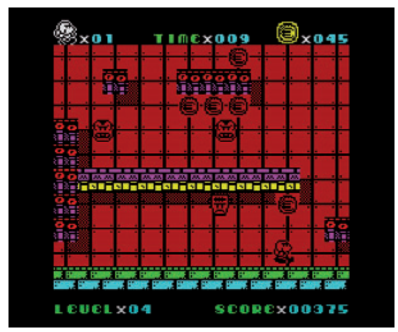


» [Spectrum] Is it a bird? Is it a plane?

Ah, bless the Mojon Twins' cotton socks. Over the last couple of months they've put out a remarkable number of games, to the point where it's pretty much impossible for us to cover them all. If you're reading, lads, well done, but slow down a little bit, yeah?

Uwol: Quest For Money is pretty much what it says on the tin: the 'hero' of the piece is Uwol who, having already amassed a large collection of retro gaming memorabilia such as Wally Week's pyjamas or Miner Willy's tax bill, has recently heard talk of a fabulously wealthy if slightly mental former thief and his mysterious, treasure-laden mansion the Storm Palace. So, deciding to extend his gaming fanboyism to the point of actually emulating some of the more dubious in-game idols, he waddles over there and sets about plundering the place. As is always the case, stealing all that money isn't going to be simple because the somewhat loopy homeowner, being something of an expert on nefariously relocating other people's property, hasn't relied on common-or-garden security systems or silent alarms to defend his treasure trove, instead plumping for the angry-looking disembodied head option, which presumably costs extra.

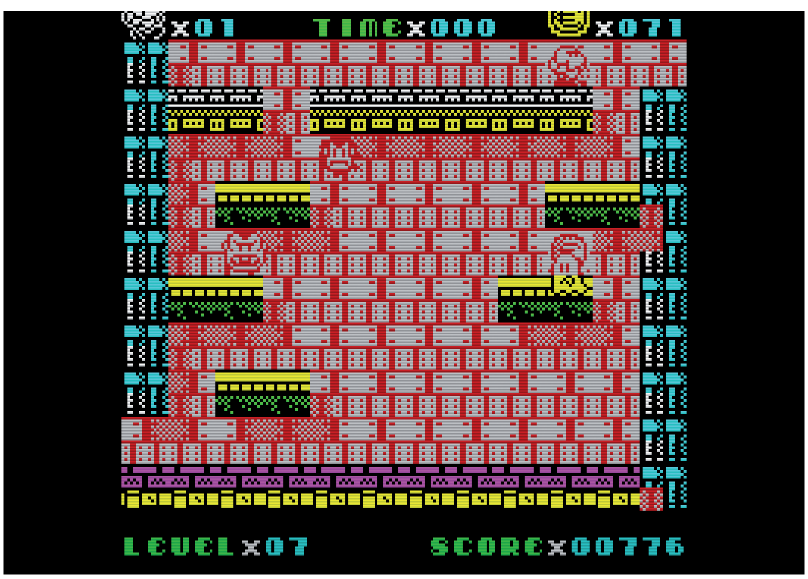
Fortunately, Uwol is very nimble and moves about the single-screen levels at a good pace so that getting to just about anywhere is relatively easy. If there aren't any walls at his height on both sides of the play area he can quite happily exit stage right and immediately enter again on the left to manoeuvre around extremely rapidly. The rooms of the Storm Palace are arranged like a pyramid, each containing a smattering of coins to collect and a couple of security devices patrolling their platforms, but, despite looking appropriately scary, these enemies don't actually notice intruders and the only threat they present is if they're bumped into.



» [Spectrum] Money, money, money.

The first collision with an enemy sees Uwol's clothes ripped off in classic *Ghosts 'N Goblins* style – a collectable T-shirt will sometimes appear to protect his modesty – while the second is fatal. There's also a timer ticking away in the status bar, and when it expires a ghost is summoned that actively chases the player around the screen. After a level is cleared of dosh the exits will open and a direction can be chosen, and if Uwol reaches the bottom of the pyramid without collecting his self-imposed target of 255 coins he'll re-enter at the top and a different route can be chosen to further line his pockets.

The Mojon Twins have a reputation for enjoyable games and this is certainly no exception; some lateral thought is required for the more involved screens and the short time limit before the ghost is released really gives a sense of urgency. The collisions can be flaky and jumping upwards through some of the holes can be fiddly, but apart from that it's solid platform action.



89%

NEW GAMES NEEDED

If you have a homebrew project you would like to see featured then please contact us at:
retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

AVOID

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** UNEXPANDED VIC-20 » **DEVELOPER:** DARREN LEE
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/YBKB97Q » **PRICE:** FREE

***Avoid* is another** piece of recently recovered VIC-20 history – the date on the game itself is 1982 because that's when it was originally written before being stashed away on tape – and it's something of a testament to cassettes as a storage medium too, in this case keeping the game safe and sound for nearly three decades!

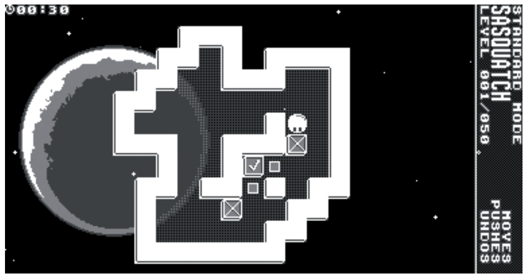
Since it predates Nokia's implementation of *Snake* that set a lot of the rules in stone for versions that followed it, *Avoid* is surprisingly different to play. While this particular snake needs to avoid colliding with anything within the play area – which amounts to its own tail and the blocks that are regularly added at random – no collectable items appear and everything is rendered as simple purple rectangles over a plain white background.

Occasionally it can be frustrating and indeed unfair as a block materialises directly in the player's path, but it's surprisingly easy to ignore this fault, and *Avoid* is rather charming in its simplicity – nothing astounding, but quite fun for occasional quick bursts.

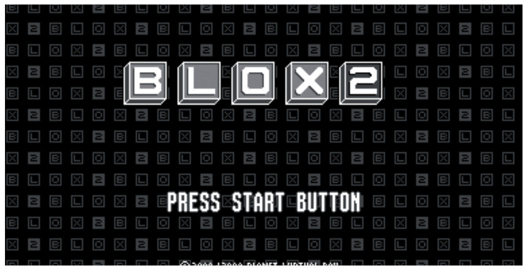
66%

» [VIC-20] 1982… 2010… same thing, isn't it?





» [Virtual Boy] *Blox 2* – Arsenal 4



BLOX 2

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** VIRTUAL BOY » **DEVELOPER:** PLANET VIRTUAL BOY
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/Y9RF6FC » **PRICE:** FREE

Yes, folks, it's another version of *Sokoban*… but this time it's in 3D! The usual trappings are present and correct: a rotund avatar in a bizarrely shaped warehouse must push crates around until they're stowed away in the places specified. The levels can either be played in order or selected arbitrarily, and among the 1,800-plus puzzles are a group of two-player simultaneous stockrooms where each human takes one D-pad and eyepiece to control their character while working around their colleague.

With so many warehouses, this is a long haul of a game, so playing it with a real Virtual Boy would probably not be advisable, even with the game's 3D graphics disabled – anything that involves staring hard at the screens and concentrating is pretty much guaranteed to leave the player needing migraine relief. But *Blox 2* can be played through an emulator, especially with a joypad configured to be comfortable, and should be heaven for anybody who enjoys difficult block-hefting puzzles.

87%

THE SPACE LIMITS II

REVIEWED BY: JASON KELK

» **FORMAT:** COMMODORE 64 » **DEVELOPER:** ACHIM VOLKERS
» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/YCRHH47 » **PRICE:** FREE

The Space Limits II has to be one of the most simplistic homebrew games we've looked at for a while. The player has a spaceship and must simply blast other spaceships to score; things do get more difficult over time, but there are only a small number of enemy sprites and movement patterns, offering very little sense of progression. This small scale is due to it being crammed into less than 4K of memory as an entry into the 2009 Minigame competition, and it isn't the first time that a potentially good game has been hog-tied.

The problem is that the C64 is already stacked to the rafters with decent shoot-'em-ups, and there have been more enjoyable and even better-looking examples of the genre from previous iterations of the same competition. *The Space Limits II* is possibly worth checking out as a technical curiosity but doesn't offer any long-term entertainment.

31%

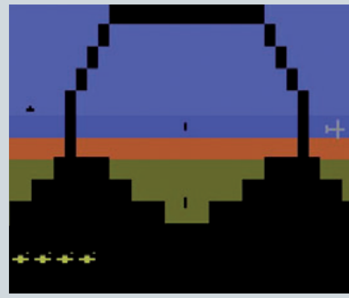




» [C64] My God, it's full of… stuff.

WHAT'S BREWING?

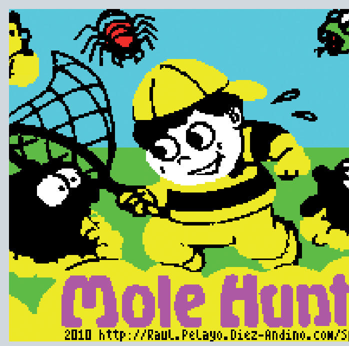
All the latest news from the homebrew community



» [Atari 2600] Neeow – daka-daka-daka!

» Planes

Over at Atari Age (**www.atariage.com**), forum poster donnerkuh has been working away at developing a flight simulator… for the Atari 2600! A screenshot and preview have been uploaded to the forum, and while it's at the very earliest stages of development, the results are already interesting. Atari Age members are encouraged to have a play, then give feedback and suggestions as to what should be done next.



» [Spectrum] Moley, moley, moley!

» Trains

A new Spectrum release – and after the news last issue, that's hardly a surprise – is *Mole Hunter*, which would appear to be based directly on a similarly titled LCD game. The graphics look nicely cartoon-like and it's got loads of colour splashed around the play area as well. The game itself, those screens, some Spanish text using the Spectrum's font, and a few pictures of the original handheld are at **raul.pelayo.diez-andino.com/spectrum/mole_hunter_juego_para_spectrum.php**

» Automobiles

And it seems almost inevitable that another month brings further Spectrum releases from those over-worked Mojon Twins (**www.mojontwins.com**). *Cheril Of The Bosque* is a game about a young warrior princess's preparations for her rite of passage and *Viaje Al Centro De La Napia* (literally translating to *Journey To The Centre Of The Nose*, apparently) is about pencils being shoved up noses. Now that's a seriously diverse range of topics!

HOMEBREW

» The scene's latest news and reviews

WHAT'S BREWING?

All the latest news from the homebrew community

» Now That's Magic

We've had exciting news from Psytronik (**www.psytronik.com**). Its PC remake of classic C64 shoot-'em-up *Armalyte* should be on sale at some point during April. We've got a review copy, which arrived just a little too late to be properly reviewed for this issue, so there will be a proper write-up next time, but it has already made a good first impression and the final release will come shipped with various goodies, including an exclusive episode of Kenz's 'One Man And His Mic' podcast and the original C64 *Armalyte*.

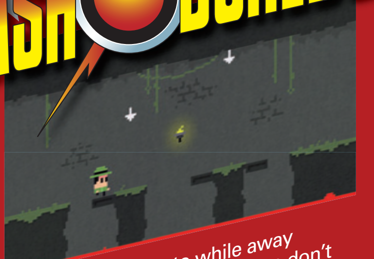


» [PC] Ninjas make crop circles!

» And For His Next Trick

And now that *Armalyte* is pretty much done and dusted, over at the Retro Remakes forum (**www.retroremakes.com**), co-developer Smila has plonked an early but still very appealing mock-up for a remake of *The Last Ninja*, so he's certainly not planning to rest on his laurels. It's far too early to be judged as such and we've literally seen just the one screen, but fingers crossed it'll do the original series justice.

FLASH BOREDOM



Want to know how to while away those boring office hours? Then don't miss out on ***Retro Gamer's*** Flash game of the month. This month we look at ***One Button Bob.***

ANOTHER FEDORA-WEARING explorer enters the fray, but Bob is different because he's influenced just by clicks on the left mouse button; the control changes with each screen and Bob sometimes jumps, changes direction or throws his boomerang, with the player simply controlling the timing to get him safely through each stage.
www.ninjadoodle.com/one-button-bob/

REMAKES WE'VE BEEN PLAYING…



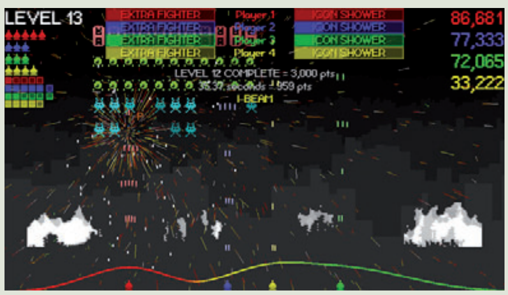
LET'S GO FIND EL DORADO

» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/Y8OLNBT



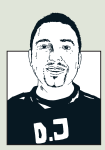
The original *Oregon Trail* was an early 'edutainment' resource management game where the player was charged with looking after a 19th Century family heading towards their new life. So as remakes go, *Let's Go Find El Dorado* – we've omitted the title's expletive, so be warned – is nowhere near… but hysterically funny to play!

Rather than juggling numbers, it's more about driving the wagon at speed over the mountains while pirouetting through the air like a possessed motocross freestyle rider in the process and, although family members will still get typhoid or dysentery from their encounters and the game is over if everybody dies, getting to El Dorado and becoming fabulously rich solves everything, even if the wagon slides across the line upside down.



DECIMATION X

» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/Y8CK543



Appearances can be deceptive and, while it might appear to be a beefed-up *Space Invaders* clone, *Decimation X* does have its differences. The most important distinction is that the enemy firepower has been ramped up to truly intense levels and the player or players are issued with an assortment of power-ups to even things up.

Having the screen awash with player bullets might initially sound easy, but since the defensive shields don't regenerate between stages – instead there are collectables to manage that – it can prove to be a cover-destroying curse if not used wisely, and the best players will need to work out strategies to defend themselves while getting their scores up. So despite appearing simplified, there's a degree of subtlety to be found.



EDEN'S AEGIS

» **DOWNLOAD:** TINYURL.COM/Y8NP2EC



The world is once more in peril and only an elite group of flying anime characters can save it! To begin with, there are two playable characters called Nanathy and Maple – further characters can be unlocked – who are apparently sorceresses capable of otherwise unpowered flight and able to throw around spells that look suspiciously like bullets, with a different firing pattern for each character. And they'll need those bullets too, because *Eden's Aegis* is, as with previous titles from Japanese developer x.x Game Room, a 'bullet hell' game. In other words, there's no way to bump into the background but the player will spend all their time weaving through the gaps between enemy projectiles.

Although many people are dissuaded from even trying bullet hell games due to the sheer number of projectiles in the screenshots, they're not as hellishly difficult as they may seem and, along with a small hit box on the character's back and the three difficulty modes – labelled as Heaven, Normal or Hell – it features a 'wait' option that deliberately slows the game down when things are busy and a 'guard' smart bomb that automatically triggers when the player is hit, both of which are enabled by default. A few players will find it overwhelming, but anybody with reasonable reactions should find some enjoyment, and more dedicated shoot-'em-up fans will have an absolute field day.



HOMEBREW HEROES

SINCE WE'VE BRANCHED OUT INTO THE WORLD OF XBOX LIVE INDIE GAMES THIS ISSUE, IT SEEMED FITTING TO HAVE A NATTER WITH **MATTHEW DOUCETTE** OF XONA GAMES (WWW.XONA.COM), A TWO-PERSON TEAM WITH DECIMATION X ALREADY TO THEIR NAME AND PLANS FOR MORE TO COME

Q&A

Retro Gamer: What initially got you into development?
Matthew Doucette: When Jason and I first saw computers at local stores and our elementary school, the graphics and videogames got us hooked. We started trying to program graphics and games immediately, before we even had a computer of our own. Back then, small teams could make games. Eventually game development teams got so big that the market appeared to lose interest in what a team of two guys could ever do. Xbox Live Arcade changed all that, bringing small, downloadable games to the service. We made loose plans to produce games for it. Then, the opportunity got even better with the Dream-Build-Play contest and Xbox Live Indie Games. It was geared towards indie developers, and we couldn't pass it up!

RG: And from those beginnings, what led to Xona Games being formed?
MD: Dream-Build-Play 2008 started it all. About two months before the contest we set off to make a 2D shmup, *Duality ZF*. Back then it was called *Zone Of Fire*, which is an accurate military term describing the gameplay. We committed to the submission and releasing the game on Xbox Live, and the rest is history. *Duality ZF* should be coming out very soon!

RG: Of the titles you've worked on to date, which would be the game you're most proud of and why?
MD: So far, there has only been *Duality ZF* and *Decimation X*. I have to say the success of *Decimation X*, with its number one spot in the bestsellers and top-rated lists in Japan, makes me the most proud. It is also a great confirmation that we can make a living at this. We are still huge *Duality ZF* fans, so we expect good things to happen with it too.

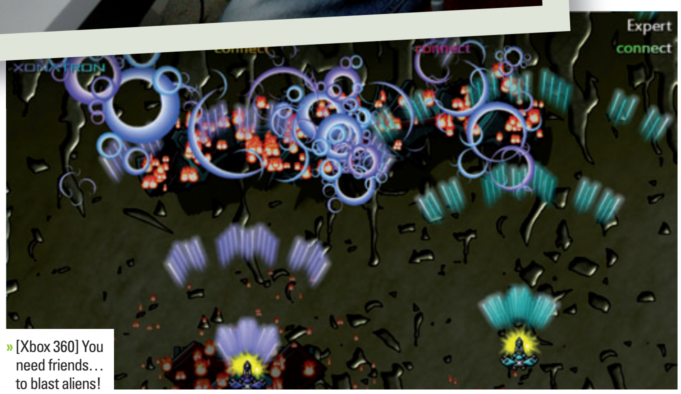
This would be a good time to explain that *Duality ZF* is taking longer than expected to land an XBLA contract, so an Indie version of the game is going to hit Xbox Live soon for a reduced price point. More on that later!

RG: What would you consider the most enjoyable and difficult parts of developing games?
MD: The most enjoyable part of developing a game is the opportunity to implement our ideas and see them in motion. Right now Jason and I have a ton of ideas we would love to explore, and the ability to do so is what makes all this fun. The most difficult part is everything else! Making games is hard work. It takes a lot of time and energy to create and polish off a game. Polish is everything, from gameplay to graphics to sound and music, and a lot of beta-testing, which can test the patience of anyone.

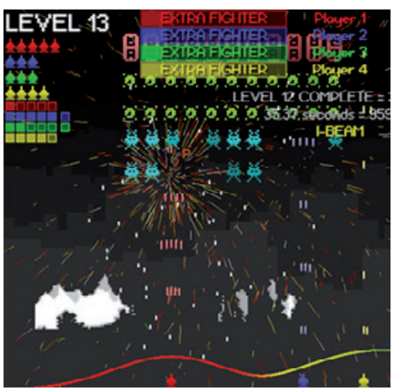
Actually, the most difficult thing of all is the transformation from making games as a hobby to a business. As a business, things have to be done differently. Schedules and meetings and relationships have to be made and kept. That adjustment has been the hardest thing for us. It is the single most powerful indie studio killer that I can think of. Our success in InNOVAcorp's I-3 Technology Start-Up Competition shows that we have done well at this most difficult task.

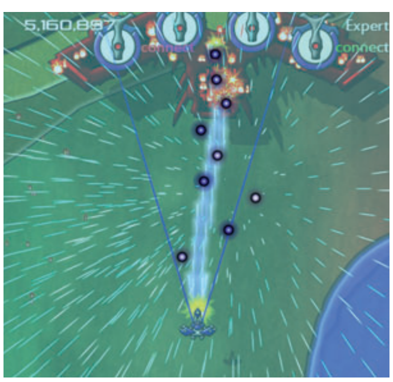
RG: You've hinted at a sequel to *Decimation X*. Can you tell us more?
MD: There's not much to tell. *Decimation X*'s sequel will be even more intense than the first. We are not focusing on the sequel just yet, as the first version has not run its rounds yet! All flaws, if any, found in *Decimation X* will be addressed as well.

RG: And finally, what advice can you give to any would-be indie videogame developers who might be reading?
MD: The best advice is to not give up if you first do not succeed. There's a lot to learn. You are more likely to create a game that fails than succeeds. Learn from this. And remember that once you are a developer, you can never look at another game, including your own, from the perspective of a gamer ever again. Developers think differently and appreciate different things. Be aware that friends and family are biased in their beta-testing. Gamers can be very crushing with their honesty, but it is only their opinion that counts. Don't expect them to change. You must change instead!



» [Xbox 360] You need friends… to blast aliens!





HIGH FIVE

The homebrew games that Matthew couldn't live without

1. **Castle Crashers** It has the old-school fun found in *Streets Of Rage* mixed in with a great new art style and gameplay.
2. **Braid** What can I say? It's revolutionary. Time-travel has been done before, and will be done again, but this makes it entertaining and fun.
3. **Osmos** The basic premise is you are a cell that can absorb smaller cells and grow, but larger cells can absorb you. I bet you are interested already!
4. **N+** Pure old-school 2D platform retro fun! I love it because it is all about gameplay, not presentation.
5. **Fez** This is retro done in a beautiful way. It adds an extra dimension to the game without destroying the two dimensions we already know.

BARGAIN HUNT

DESPERATE TO FINISH OFF YOUR RETRO COLLECTION? WANT TO GET YOUR HANDS ON ALL THE BEST BARGAINS BUT DON'T KNOW WHERE TO GO? THEN VISIT **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET/BARGAIN_HUNT.PHP** AND DISCOVER ALL THE CLASSIC MACHINES THAT YOU'LL EVER NEED

You've been asking for it forever, but we're pleased to announce a brand new look for **Retro Gamer**'s Buyer's Guide section that makes it incredibly easy to get your hands on all the best retro bargains.

Using our new search engine couldn't be easier. All you need to do is select a manufacturer and machine from the pull-down menu. Once you've found the system you're after, the magic of the internet will search eBay for the top 20 ending items, meaning that you'll be able to gauge the market's health with very little effort. This month, we've been looking for great deals on arcade cabinets.



Head on over to the excellent **www.retrogamer.net** and click on 'Bargain Hunt' or visit **www.retrogamer.net/bargain_hunt.php**



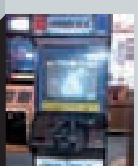
Put in the details for the greatest computer in the world and discuss with your staff writer why it's so much better than the ZX Spectrum.



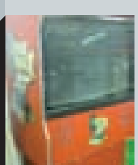
Swoon in delight as you find yourself getting ever closer to collecting all the £1.99 *Simulator* games that Codemasters ever released.

eBAY BARGAINS

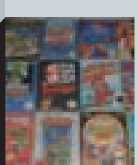
Retro Gamer has been scouring the world's most popular auction site to find the best bargains out there…



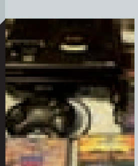
■ This immaculate *Chase HQ* cabinet was going for £175 with hours to spare. If it stayed around this price mark someone snagged a bargain.



■ This faulty *Mad Dog 2* machine had a single bid of 99 pence. Weirdly, the seller didn't make a big deal about the 29 LaserDisc movies included.



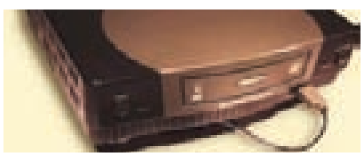
■ £100 might seem a little steep for a NES, but when it comes packed with 46 games you can kind of understand the high asking price.



■ £75 for a Mega Drive/CD with ten games, including *Sol-Feace* and *Cobra Command*. It included *Last Battle*, harming the appeal of this lot.

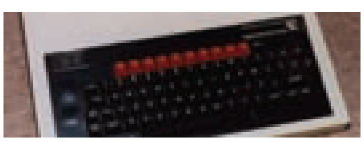
3DO

3DO GOLDSTAR	£45+ ($81+)
PANASONIC FZ-1 (FRONT LOADER)	£40+ ($74+)
PANASONIC FZ-10 (TOP LOADER)	£20+ ($37+)



ACORN

ARCHIMEDES	£30 ($55)
ATOM	£50 ($92)
ELECTRON	£10 ($18)
BBC MICRO	£15 ($28)



AMSTRAD

CPC 464	£10+ ($18+)
CPC 664	£90+ ($165+)
CPC 6128	£25+ ($46+)
GX4000	£50+ ($92+)

APPLE

APPLE II	£30+ ($55+)

ATARI

400/800/600XL/XE	£20+ ($37+)
2600 (VCS)	£20+ ($37+)
5200	£30 ($55)
7800	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR	£20+ ($37+)
JAGUAR CD	£70 ($129)
LYNX I/II	£20+ ($37+)
ST	£20+ ($37+)

BANDAI

GUNDAM RX-78	£75+ ($138+)
PLAYDIA	£90 ($166)
PIPPIN (ATMARK)	£500+ ($921+)
WONDERSWAN	£10 ($18)
WONDERSWAN COLOR	£20 ($37)
WONDERSWAN CRYSTAL	£25 ($46)



COMMODORE

AMIGA 500/600/1200	£20+ ($37+)
C16/PLUS/4	£15+ ($28+)
C64	£10+ ($18+)
C64 GS	£30+ ($55+)
C128	£30+ ($55+)
CDTV	£20 ($37)
CD32	£25 ($46)
VIC-20	£10+ ($18+)



FUJITSU

FUJITSU FM	£100+ ($184+)
FUJITSU FM TOWNS MARTY	£200+ ($368+)



MISCELLANEOUS

BALLY ASTROCADE	£20 ($37)
BARCODE BATTLER	£5 ($18)
CASIO LOOPY	£25 ($46)
FAIRCHILD CHANNEL F	£10 ($18)
COLECOVISION	£30 ($55)
DRAGON 32/64	£8 ($15)
ARCADIA 2001	£10 ($18)
EPOCH CASSETTE VISION	£20 ($37)
EPOCH SUPER CASSETTE VISION	£30 ($55)
INTELLIVISION	£40+ ($74+)
ODYSSEY	£10 ($18)
ORIC-1	£20 ($37)
PLAYSTATION	£10 ($18)
SAM COUPÉ	£50-£200 ($92-$368)
SUPERVISION	£15 ($28)
TIGER ELEC GAME.COM	£15 ($28)
TOMY TUTOR (MK1/JR/MK2)	£10 ($18)
VECTREX (MB/GCE)	£80 ($147)
X68000	£90+ ($166+)

MSX

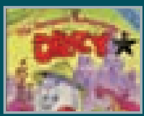
MSX 1	£10+ ($18+)
MSX 2	£20+ ($37+)
MSX 2+	£30+ ($55+)
MSX TURBO R	£30+ ($55+)

NEC

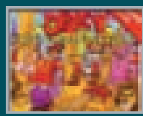
PC-6601	£10+ ($18+)

RETRO AUCTION WATCH

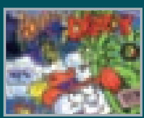
Retro Gamer sifts through the pages of eBay to report back on any items of interest that have caught our eyes. This month we've been digging for Dizzy games, and here's what we found.



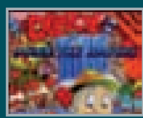
FANTASTIC ADVENTURES OF DIZZY
System: **NES**
Normally sells for **£10**
Ended at **£17.99**



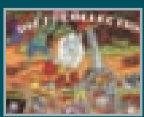
DIZZY: PRINCE OF THE YOLKFOLK
System: **C64**
Normally sells for **£1**
Ended at **No Sale**



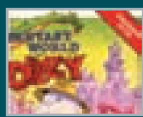
FANTASTIC DIZZY
System: **Mega Drive**
Normally sells for **£9**
Ended at **£14.99**



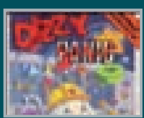
DIZZY DOWN THE RAPIDS
System: **Amstrad**
Normally sells for **£0.99**
Ended at **£3**



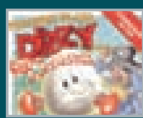
THE DIZZY COLLECTION
System: **Amiga**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£2.50**



FANTASY WORLD DIZZY
System: **C64**
Normally sells for **£1.50**
Ended at **£3.90**



DIZZY PANIC
System: **Amstrad**
Normally sells for **£5**
Ended at **£2.40**



TREASURE ISLAND DIZZY
System: **C64**
Normally sells for **£1.50**
Ended at **No Sale**

PC-8801	**£20 ($37)**
PC-9801	**£35 ($65)**
PC-FX	**£50 ($92)**
PC-ENGINE	**£55 ($101)**
PC-ENGINE GT	**£70+ ($129+)**
TURBOGRAFX-16	**£30 ($55)**
TURBO EXPRESS	**£50 ($92)**
SUPERGRAFX	**£80 ($147)**
PC-E CD-ROM/ TURBOGRAFX CD	**£50+ ($92+)**
PC-E DUO/ TURBO DUO	**£120 ($221)**
DUO-R	**£80 ($147)**

NINTENDO

FAMICOM	**£60 ($111)**
FAMICOM AV	**£40 ($74)**
FAMICOM DISK SYSTEM	**£70 ($129)**
SHARP FAMICOM TWIN	**£100 ($184)**
GAME & WATCH	**£1+ ($2+)**
GAME BOY B/W	**£5 ($9)**
GAME BOY POCKET	**£8 ($15)**
GAME BOY COLOR	**£12 ($22)**
GAME BOY ADVANCE	**£25 ($46)**
N64	**£10 ($18)**
N64 DD	**£150+ ($276+)**
NES (TOASTER)	**£15 ($28)**
NES (DOG BONE)	**£50 ($92)**
SNES (SUPER FAMICOM IN JAPAN)	**£20 ($37)**
SNES 2 (KNOWN AS 'JR' IN JAPAN)	**£50+ ($92+)**
VIRTUAL BOY	**£80 ($147)**



PHILIPS

CD-I	**£20+ ($37+)**
CD-I 450/500	**£30 ($55)**
VIDEOPAC G7000	**£10 ($18)**
VIDEOPAC G7400	**£20 ($37)**

SEGA

32X	**£35 ($65)**
DREAMCAST	**£25 ($46)**
GAME GEAR	**£15 ($28)**
SG-1000	**£50-£150 ($80-$260)**
SC-3000	**£50 ($92)**
MASTER SYSTEM I/II	**£10 ($18)**



AMSTRAD MEGA PC	**£10 ($18)**
TERADRIVE	**£100 ($184)**
MEGA DRIVE/ GENESIS I/II	**£25 ($46)**
GENESIS 3	**£35 ($65)**
NOMAD	**£100 ($184)**
MULTIMEGA/ WONDERMEGA/ CDX/X'EYE	**£100+ ($184+)**
MEGA-CD (SCD) I/II	**£50+ ($92+)**
PICO	**£20 ($37)**
SATURN	**£30 ($55)**

SINCLAIR

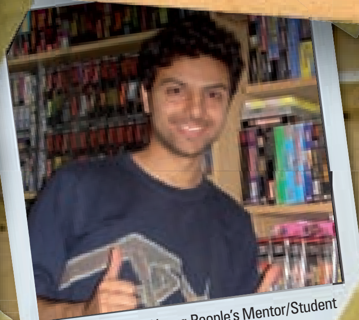
ZX80	**£200 ($368)**
ZX81	**£70 ($129)**
ZX SPECTRUM 48K	**£10 ($18)**
ZX SPECTRUM 128K	**£40 ($74)**
ZX SPECTRUM+	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +2	**£35 ($65)**
ZX SPECTRUM +3	**£40 ($74)**

SNK

NEO-GEO AES	**£150+ ($276+)**
NEO-GEO MVS	**£70 ($129)**
NEO-GEO CD	**£100 ($184)**
NEO-GEO CDZ	**£80+ ($147+)**
NEO-GEO POCKET	**£20 ($37)**
NEO-GEO POCKET COLOR	**£35 ($65)**

COLLECTOR'S CORNER

THIS MONTH'S COLLECTOR IS IBRAR KHAN, WHO HAS AMASSED A TRULY AMAZING NEO GEO POCKET COLLECTION



» **Occupation:** Young People's Mentor/Student
» **Age:** 29
» **Location:** Birmingham



» "Yes, there were quite a few card-based and gambling games released on the Neo Geo Pocket. Just not my cup of tea at all. In fact, I won't lie: I've never even played them, but they still look nice."



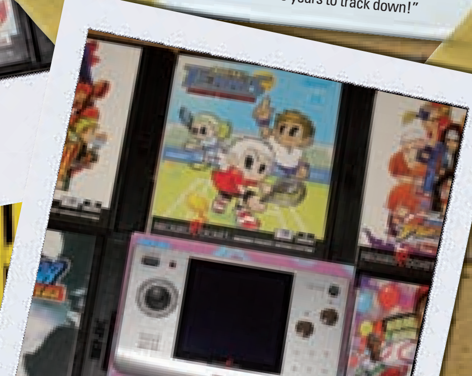
» "The NGP next to its colour counterpart. Even by today's standards the machine looks sweet! I'm currently hunting the Hanshin Tigers Limited Edition NGPC."



» "A complete PAL collection. The entire collection took me about three years to complete. The five NGP games alone took two years to track down!"



» "SNK also released some really good puzzle games, *Magical Drop Pocket* being my favourite in this pile. There were days where I'd spend hours on this game after university – not sure if I should admit to that."



If you have a collection that you feel the rest of the **Retro Gamer** readership needs to know about, then contact us at **retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk** and we'll do our best to get you in the magazine.

MAILBAG

HAVE YOUR SAY… SEND US A LETTER OR MAKE YOURSELF HEARD ON THE ONLINE FORUM – **WWW.RETROGAMER.NET**

LARA LOVE?

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

Thank you for the latest issue. I especially enjoyed the article that was dedicated to *Sabreman*.

Anyway, I would like to know if you have ever considered writing an article about the old-school *Tomb Raider* games, mainly the five previous-generation titles that were released before *Angel Of Darkness*.

The original 1996 game was one of the most groundbreaking and critically acclaimed games ever made and gave us Lara Croft, officially the most successful videogame heroine of all time according to the *Guinness Book Of Records*. These games still have a loyal following today and are considered by many to have a replay value and soul that the later next-gen versions are lacking in.

There also exists a thriving community building and playing new levels courtesy of the level editor that was packaged with *Tomb Raider 5* and is now freely available. Sites such as **trle.net** offer thousands of these homebrew *Tomb Raider* levels available to download. I was very excited when I first discovered this online community and realised that the old-school *TR* games were still very much being kept alive.

Please keep up the good work, and I look forward to hearing whether or not you will consider including a *Tomb Raider* article in a future issue of the magazine.

Yours faithfully,

John G, via email



» [PC] Expect an in-depth look at Lara's earlier adventures in a future issue of the magazine.

We did actually do a feature on Lara many, many issues ago (issue 21), John, but so much has happened since then that it might not hurt to look at the franchise again. Oh, and cheers for telling us about that site. It's given us a new feature idea…

HIDDEN GEMS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I'd just like to say that I absolutely adore the new 'The Unconverted' feature that's recently



» [Arcade] Michael Smith recently discovered *Aliens* for the first time. Expect more hidden gems in future issues.



STAR LETTER

FAR FROM A KNIT WIT



» Want your favourite game on a sweater? It's only a few email clicks away.

Dear Retro Gamer,

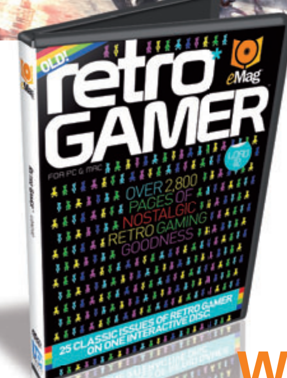
For my 30th birthday my wife decided to give me a special present, so she arranged for a good knitter (**ritishcha.livejournal.com**) whom she knew via LiveJournal, to make this sweater based on the game you surely know – and I surely still like.

I know that this story probably won't qualify – this wasn't a surprise, as my wife asked me beforehand, and she also didn't make it herself, though the knitter is from my hometown, so you can say that she's a neighbour, but isn't everyone a neighbour on the internet? – but you won't pass on that photo. Maybe I'll get some bonus points for being Russian?

Best regards,

Ilya Chentsov

Wow. We're not sure what to be most impressed by: your fantastic sweater or that truly amazing beard you're sporting. Anyone wearing such a magnificent sweater deserves a prize, so here's a copy of the latest eMag. Darran's already negotiating for a *Strider* sweater



WIN!

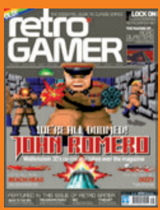
Every month, one lucky reader will receive a copy of our brand new eMag, **Retro Gamer Load 2**, a bargain if ever there was one. All you have to do is present a lucid, thought-provoking piece of literature that melts our souls. Failing that, something funny with swear words or something *Strider*-related will go down just as well…

Next Month: Nolan Bushnell



>> BURNING QUESTION?

IF YOU HAVE a burning question, such as 'Will David Braben ever patch things up with Ian Bell?' or 'does Matthew Smith check in to hotels as Miner Willy?' then you should head straight over to our forum to post your questions to our interviewees. The best of the bunch will be answered and revealed in the next issue. To find out who we'll be interviewing in the coming months, visit the Retro Gamer forum now at www.retrogamer.net/forum



CONTACT US

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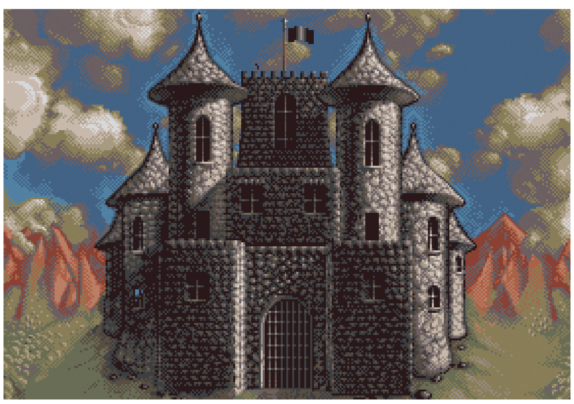
Email: retrogamer@imagine-publishing.co.uk

> "It's been a real joy reading about all these gems that I was never able to play at home"

RETROBATE PROFILE



Name:	I. Owain Evans
Joined:	04 Feb 2010
Location:	UK
Occupation:	Farm Worker
Website:	Not given
Fave Games System:	Any 16-bit console!



>> [Amiga] *Knightmare* was extremely popular during the Eighties and it received a pretty good Amiga translation as well.

appeared in the magazine. I very rarely had the chance to visit arcades back in the day, so it's been a real joy reading about all these hidden gems that I was never able to play on my Spectrum and Mega Drive. I used to adore playing *UN Squadron* on my friend's SNES back in the day, and find it absolutely astonishing that its sequel never received a home port.

Anyway, after reading through the article I decided to download all the games that were featured via MAME and I'm delighted to report that *Aliens* and *Cadillacs And Dinosaurs* are now two of my favourite games. I can't believe that I've gone this long without ever experiencing them, and I urge other readers to check out these games as soon as possible. Anyway, thanks for printing the article and I hope to see my hidden gems covered in future issues of the magazine.

Michael Smith, Bristol

Glad to hear that you're enjoying the new feature, Michael. Ryan did a cracking job with it and it's proving to be so popular that we plan on covering it in every issue from now on. If you or any other readers want to see certain games featured then don't hesitate to contact us.

A REAL KNIGHTMARE

Dear **Retro Gamer**

I've been getting your magazine since day one and enjoy reading it from cover to cover, mainly because seeing some of the games remind me of my misspent childhood. Happy days indeed.

Anyway, here's a suggestion for an article, which you might find interesting, and as far as I can tell you've not covered this before. What about looking at some of the old TV programmes that used to feature computers – or rather computer graphics – in them? I'm obviously talking about programmes such as *Knightmare* and *The Adventure Game*, both of which I really used to enjoy as a kid. Perhaps it could feature in a 'where are they now?' special. Those are just two that I can clearly remember, but also how about *Games Master* and other computer game-related ones? You could even mention that use of an Amiga in *Babylon 5*.

Regards,

Andy Baynes, via email

That's a great idea, Andy. We're constantly asked to cover other aspects of retro gaming and you're certainly not the first person to ask about *Knightmare*. We'll definitely look into this and see if it's possible to put something together later on in the year.

NEW REVIEWS

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I just wanted to add my support for the new games that you continue to cover. I know that you've had complaints when you've reviewed titles like *Ninja Gaiden Sigma 2*, but I think you're totally justified to do so and am really looking forward to your thoughts on *Final Fantasy XIII*. I don't care how new a franchise is or how much it differs from early games; I just want to know if it's a game that I will enjoy, and so far **RG** has never steered me wrong. Keep up the great work, and please can you add more pages for this section.

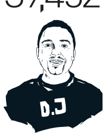
James Black, via email

* BEAT THE TEAM

Think you're good at retro games? See if you can beat the staff at some of their favourite titles



High Score: 39,452



DARRAN

CHOSEN GAME: FROGGER

Why I picked it: Because playing *Frogger Returns* was making me very sad and I decided that I needed some joy in my life.

Handy advice: Pick up the flies and the lady frog for a bonus 200 points. Very handy!



High Score: 39,452



CRAIG

CHOSEN GAME: VECTOR RUNNER

Why I picked it: Because it evokes the spirit of *3D Deathchase*, the best Speccy game ever.

Handy advice: Learn what you can get away with regarding close shaves with obstacles.



High Score: 118,230



STUART

CHOSEN GAME: CISCO HEAT

Why I picked it: The home ports are so dire that I was curious to see if the arcade game was any better.

Handy advice: Learn the game's erratic cornering and approach in a low gear in case you mess up.

From the forum

» To have your say visit www.retrogamer.net/forum

Every month, **Retro Gamer** asks a question on the forum and prints the best replies. This month we wanted to know...

What's your favourite Atari coin-op?

Bub&Bob The correct answer is *Star Wars* – do I win a prize? If so, can I have a year's free subscription to the digital copy of **RG**, please?

the_hawk Really tough question. I'll have to plump for the mighty *Missile Command*.

Spacepatrol *Peter Pack Rat* – a real hidden gem. Just discovered there was also a C64 conversion of it. I wish I'd have known that as a kid!

Roo *S.T.U.N. Runner*. The graphics blew my little mind back when I was a wee boy.

Mayhem Do we get bonus points for naming obscure stuff like *Quantum*? For me, though, it probably has to be *Tempest*. Although *Star Wars* runs it very close...

Opa-Opa *Star Wars*. That amazing sit-down cab was just like being in a real X-Wing when you were 8 years old. The Force is strong in this one.

harlegu1n Believe it or not, the only Atari coin-op I've ever played is *Primal Rage* and I absolutely loved it. No home port comes near the impressive arcade original.

Greyfox I really loved the *Indiana Jones* arcade cab, devilishly hard and had great sampled speech of Indy – "We go from here!" – and the rope bridge stage was just great and took a while to figure out what you had to do. It's a shame the games these days don't match the awesomeness of the great Atari cab did back then.

r0jaws Without a doubt, *Battlezone*. I can't believe it wasn't the first response!

Clarance That would have to be *Asteroids*.

TheDude18 *Xybots*. A 3D version of *Gauntlet* in a groovy-looking cab and a control system only you seem to grasp? Yes please.

yakmag So unfair! Such a slew of games to choose from... okay, *RoadBlasters*. Loved firing off the nuke, watching it explode on the horizon and then driving past the shadows of the cars. Brilliance!

Scapegoat *Star Wars* by a nose, but only for the sit-down cab. Otherwise it's a tie between *Missile Command* and *Battlezone*.

Sputryk Tough choice. I plump for *Xybots*, though – a great twist on the *Gauntlet* theme, plenty of hair-raising tension, and in two-player mode an epic fight for survival.

Smurph *Gauntlet*! Although they should have changed the speech to say 'Dave shot the food' to reflect how annoying my mate was.

mrspud *Paperboy* appealed to my inner window-smashing vandal as a kid, so I'll go with that.

Rory Milne *Tempest*. Without a shadow, doubt or any combination of the aforementioned.

Random_Dave Sure, the *Star Wars* cabinet is great, but with its sublime spinner it's *Tempest* that can always keep me playing for marathon sessions.

Mr. Pointless It's a toss-up between *Tempest* and *S.T.U.N. Runner* for me. Actually, I'll go for *S.T.U.N. Runner*, considering that I actually got to play the cab, as opposed to *Tempest*, which I've only ever played in the many Atari compilations.

TwoHeadedBoy *Primal Rage*, *Marble Madness*, *Gauntlet II*, *Escape From The Planet Of The Robot Monsters*... Could a question be any more vague?

Sel Feena *Gauntlet*. As a multiplayer experience it's second only to *Bomberman*.

Protoman *Asteroids* was also one of my first Atari 2600 games. Good times.

Doddsy Easily *Hard Drivin'* for me. I was learning to drive at the time that it was out and that simulator sure did help with my steering and gear-changing for a smoother ride in a real car. I also think it was to blame for turning me into a bit of a boy racer.

YOUR OPINION PLEASE

CIVILIZATION V

Optimus The new incarnation of one of my favourite games series! There are a couple of screenshots floating around the interweb too, but nothing that gives away too much...

Space Turnip Excellent, a return to proper *Civ* games and I'm looking forward to this a lot, as with every other version. In fact, I may now go and play *Civ 3*!

rocky1980 Damn, looking forward to this.

paranoid marvin For me, *Civilization* has never progressed since number 2. This one looks interesting, though.

Dave300 Excellent! I've always been a fan of the *Civ* series. The intro/teaser looks great, so let's hope the game is as good.

KING OF FIGHTERS XIII

Megamixer Apparently, the 13th game HAS been announced by SNK and it'll be running from the Taito X2 board. No more info at the moment but there is allegedly some on the way next month.

Shadowman No surprise that *XIII* has been announced but like I keep saying, please don't screw up again, SNK!

speedlolita Sod 'em. After *XII* I'm not buying another *KOF*.

Mr Vengence I wouldn't write off the *KOF* series just yet, speed. SNK pretty much ran out of money developing *XII*, shoved it out, and are now working away at it to make it the game it should have been. That's what *XIII* will be, I think.

Megamixer *'96* owns every one of them, in my opinion. *2000* is pretty good too.

WONDERSWAN

the_b1ues Are these worth looking into buying? I really like the look of them and some of the games look good. I do know that they're only available in Japan, so are they worth the trouble trying to collect for?

TwoHeadedBoy My my, of COURSE they are! I have a WonderSwan and a WonderSwan Color. The screen's terrible on the Color, so it'd be best to go for a Swan Crystal (probably). Just avoid the RPGs and you should be fine.

DreamcastRIP Yep, the Swan Crystal is most definitely the model to go for due to its improved screen. Given a little patience you should be able to pick one up new for £30-35, although they occasionally can be snagged for considerably less.

Old VS NEW

Each month, we'll be finding out if the classics are better than their successors. This month, which AVP game is the best?

Alien vs Predator 1999 (PC)



Aliens vs Predator 2010 (360)



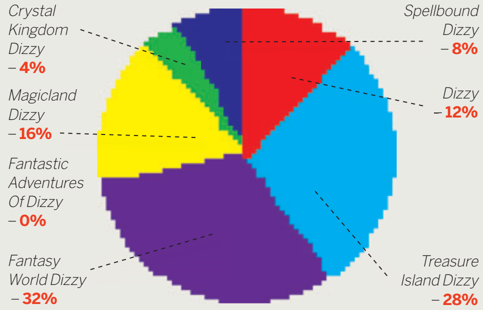
62% | 38%

TheDude18 The original PC version is a classic. Close to the films, scary and claustrophobic.

Khisanth The same guys have done the new one with a fantastic new engine.

HOT TOPIC

Best Dizzy Game?



"*Fantasy World Dizzy*, as it was my favourite by a long way. The sampled speech at the start of the Spectrum version was gobsmacking at the time."
– Groo_The_Wanderer

"*Magicland Dizzy*. It was the one that I played the most and I really loved it. Though the jumping was and still is very hard"
– nakamura

CONTACT US

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Glad you're interested in reading the reviews, James. We're unlikely to increase the page count, as the current layout seems just right, but we'll keep on covering games that we think will be of interest to readers, whether they're based on classic franchises or not.

AN APOLOGY

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I am a big fan of your magazine, but there was a sentence in a recent issue that I would like you to be aware of. In issue 72 of your magazine, in the Retro Shamer section, there was a look back at *Last Action Hero*. Halfway through the otherwise very good article the author wrote the line: "Jack performs these moves with the urgency and power of someone suffering with brittle bone disease."

As someone who suffers with brittle bone disease I did not find this remark very tasteful. I feel that the way in which this serious disease was used to get a cheap laugh was not a very wise or accurate thing to do. The disease can put people in wheelchairs and these people can break over a hundred bones. However, sufferers like myself have a milder form of the illness and can live active lives. In my younger days I swam for Scotland at the British Championships.

I never usually write letters like this and know that you never meant to cause offence, but I love your magazine. I often find it very witty and informative and I have been an avid reader for many years. I write this letter in the hopes that it might help you avoid similar situations in the future.

Alan Tully, Dunfermline

Thanks for writing in, Alan, about something that means so much to you. We obviously never mean to offend anyone here at Retro Gamer and we apologise for our lack of judgement in this instance. We'll do our best to ensure that similar throwaway remarks don't happen in the future.

"I was disappointed to discover that my SNES and Mega Drive are incompatible with my new LCD TV"

DISCUSSED THIS MONTH

Battlefield 1943

Since Stuart has only just got online with his Xbox, we've all been spending a fair amount of time playing DICE's excellent XBLA update. Both Stuart and Steve have become pretty good thanks to memorising the maps and putting the hours in, while Darran struggles to get more than three kills per game. Obviously Stuart and Steve find this highly amusing. Add Mark Owen to your Friends List if you fancy joining in.

NOT RETRO READY

Dear **Retro Gamer**,

I recently purchased a brand new LCD TV, but am having all sorts of problems with it. While all my new consoles work fine on it, I was disappointed to discover that my SNES, Mega Drive and Saturn are totally incompatible. The visuals either appear stretched or simply run far too fast, making them impossible to play. Do you have any advice as to what is causing this and how it can be fixed, as I really don't want to play on the tiny upstairs TV.

Timothy Whitehead, via email

We're really sorry, Timothy, but unless you buy an external upscaler it's highly unlikely that any of your old systems will work. Newer TVs don't tend to support the lower resolutions of older TVs and it's a problem that Darran also experienced on his old LCD. Unless you're prepared to change your TV and check for a compatible system you're just going to have to play your games upstairs.



» [Xbox 360] It may be brand spanking new, but we think that *Final Fantasy XIII* has enough retro credentials to warrant coverage in the mag.

CURRENTLY PLAYING





DARRAN

Plants vs Zombies

While my daughter has been hammering away at the PC version, I've just discovered the iPhone offering and it's just as good. In fact, it's amazing thanks to tight controls, great visuals and lashings of humour.





CRAIG

Angry Birds

Taking a warped approach to the age-old artillery genre, *Angry Birds* tasks you with catapulting suicidal birds at egg-stealing pigs barricaded in various ramshackle defensive structures.





STUART

Battlefield 1943

Since I've only recently got round to having the internet installed in my house, I've been playing quite a bit of Xbox Live this month, and the excellent *Battlefield 1943* has been taking up a large quota of my free time.

retro GAMER

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THE MAKING OF STRIDER

In an exclusive new interview, Kouichi Yotsui explains how he collaborated with manga giant Moto Kikaki to create one of Capcom's most extravagant arcade hits

OTHER EXCITING FEATURES

- **Discover how the Cheshire-based Traveller's Tales went from the 16-bit hit *Leander* to world domination with the *Lego* franchise in just 19 short years**
- **Find out how Steve Wozniak's Apple II became one of the most successful 8-bit computers and helped turn Apple into one of the world's biggest companies**
- ***Retro Gamer* looks back at the origins of the mighty *Rogue*, and how it changed videogame dungeon crawlers forever**

ENDGAME



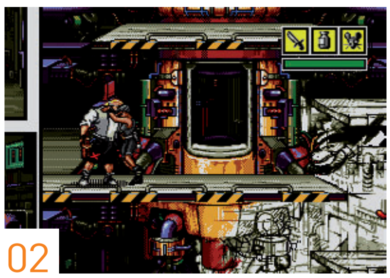
COMIX ZONE

» Released after the PlayStation and Saturn, Comix Zone really needed something special up its sleeve to stand a fighting chance on its release. Bring on fluid arcade beat-'em-up action, a rocking soundtrack, and some awe-inspiring visuals framed within the panels of a comic book. Shame the game was a tad short and harder than frozen diamonds…



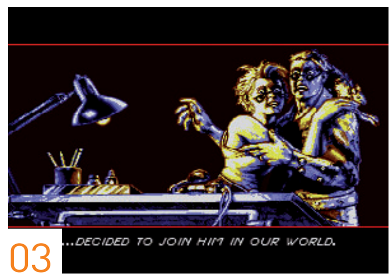
01

» Bodacious hero Sketch Turner defeats the evil Mortus through the art of *Bishi Bashi Special*, foiling his plan to launch a nuke and obliterate the New World Empire and saving his friend Alissa in the process. Double phew!



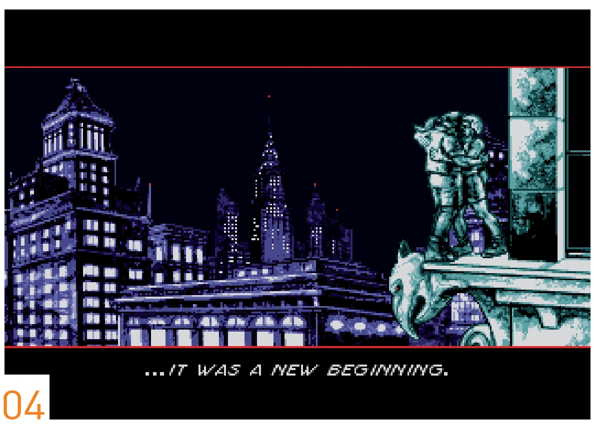
02

» With the mission over, Alissa breaks free from her prison and gets cosy with Sketch. He promises to show her his special HB pencil before leaving his creation for this world to record an album with Blackstreet.



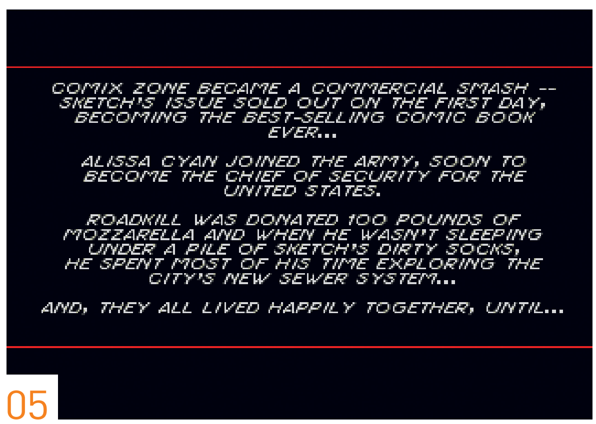
03

» But Alissa, realising that she can't live without Sketch by her side, decides to leave her partly unfinished post-apocalyptic comic-book world and opt for a life in our universe with Sketch instead.



04

» The pair then decide to celebrate by hugging on a tiny ledge just outside Sketch's tenth-storey apartment window. Will they jump? Will they not jump? Who knows? We'll probably find out in the next panel.



05

» Ahhh… An epilogue tying together all the loose ends while leaving room for a sequel. Sketch becomes bigger than Stan Lee, Alissa becomes the hardest woman in the universe, and the rat gets fat and spends his days down a sewer. Inspired.